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# From Startup to Success: An Entrepreneurial Case Study

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# From Startup to Success: An Entrepreneurial Case Study

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of Honors

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## ABSTRACT

This research is a case study based on an entrepreneurship located in Henderson, Kentucky called HorseFeathers Gifts. HorseFeathers Gifts supplies handmade, vintage-inspired jewelry and accessories to customers all over the world. The case study documents the path taken by HorseFeathers Gifts' owners, showing exactly how the entrepreneurship reached the successful position that it currently holds. Based on the case studies available and a review of the literature, it is apparent that no other case studies like this one exist. Information for this case was gathered by interviewing both owners of HorseFeathers Gifts. The interviews helped me to learn about the business' story from the day it was first engendered until the present day. This case study displays the business' processes, successes, and failures, and ultimately gives struggling or aspiring entrepreneurs advice on how to better their own chances of business survival.

## CHAPTER 1: Introduction

The research accomplished in this thesis is a case study specific to displaying the pathway to success of one particular entrepreneurship. After examining the entrepreneurship of my choice, I constructed a case study dedicated to inspiring present and potential entrepreneurs. I am constructing this case study because of the potential boon that it may be to entrepreneurs who are struggling or hesitant to initiate businesses of their own. Each individual has reasons for avoiding or abandoning business ventures; however, with this case, I hope to inspire entrepreneurs to learn from the successful business owners around them. Giving individuals a real example of entrepreneurial success, may encourage them to transform fear or hesitance into thriving, passion-filled, world-changing businesses. People may then see opportunities around them with a different perspective and begin to reach their full potential. Many business case studies are illustrative or educational but not inspirational. I have addressed this deficiency in the case study contained with this thesis.

For this case study, I will be examining one company: HorseFeathers Gifts. HorseFeathers is a five-year-old, eco-friendly company that designs and creates made-to-order jewelry and accessories. The business grew up in rural Western Kentucky, and all of its wares are inspired by the small town life and landscape around it. I picked this company because of its quality products, its values, and because it met all of my qualifications. My qualifications for the business featured in my case study were that the business could have no more than two owners, must have been started in one of the owner's homes, and must have been initially funded without outside involvement. HorseFeathers Gifts met all of these qualifications.

However, one limitation exists for this research: only one company was examined. Consequently, this case study has a much narrower scope than one written from several companies' stories. The use of only one company does not allow for contrasts and comparisons between companies' pathways to success; however, it is still my hope that entrepreneurs will gain some insight from the information contained with the subsequent case study and ultimately my thesis.

## CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

### Defining Entrepreneurship and the Entrepreneur

An entrepreneurial case study is best started with a clear understanding of who an entrepreneur is and what an entrepreneur does. A formal definition of an entrepreneur is found in the *Merriam Webster Dictionary*. The dictionary states that an entrepreneur is “one who organizes, manages, and assumes the risks of a business or enterprise” (“Entrepreneur,” n.d.). According to this definition, an entrepreneur is simply an individual who owns a business and bears the risk of that business. Although the above definition is true, an entrepreneur is much more than a business owner who bears risk. An entrepreneur is an innovator in a world where innovation is the name of the game. I prefer journalist Philipp Harper’s definition of an entrepreneur best of all. Harper says entrepreneurs are “men and women who take capital -- their own or somebody else’s -- and use it to beget more capital” (Harper, n.d.). With this definition, entrepreneurs do more than manage a business and bear risk; they also use capital to make more capital. Entrepreneurs are easy to identify regardless of having an ideal definition. Henry Ford, Steve Jobs, and Bill Gates are some that come to mind. Or perhaps the fruit of an entrepreneur’s labor such as Starbuck’s coffee, the McDonald’s Big Mac®, or an item from the vast selection of the online super-store Amazon.com (Llewellyn & Holt, n.d.a).

Entrepreneurs identify needs or opportunities and then undertake the business venture themselves. They take what they have, and they find a way to make more. Persistent and passionate, entrepreneurs do not rely on conglomerations to tell them what they can and cannot do, and they do not rely on a team of employees to dream for them. Entrepreneurs are in control of their own dreams and ultimately their own destiny. Entrepreneurs fly high; however, they can



also fall hard. The entrepreneurial spirit says, “Soaring up there in the great, big, blue sky is my goal; falling is merely a possibility” (K.D. Sellers, personal communication, August 17, 2013).

Entrepreneurs see no obstacles; they only see possibilities.

By definition, to innovate is to introduce something “as if new” (“Innovate,” n.d.). Although entrepreneurs are often identified as innovators, it is important to note that many entrepreneurs do not invent entirely new products or services. Many entrepreneurs simply combine ideas and inventions that are already in existence to create something new. Marc Ventresca, professor at the Said Business School, gave a presentation in 2011 at a Technology, Entertainment, and Design (TED) conference in Oxford discussing these entrepreneurial efforts through combination. In Ventresca’s presentation he appears to shy away from the “heroic” view of entrepreneurs, which displays entrepreneurs as pioneers going where no man has gone (although he acknowledges this fact), and leans more towards entrepreneurs as “system builders, creating enterprise by ‘marshaling, mobilizing, and connecting different worlds’” (as quoted in McCracken, 2011). He later gives the example of the Apple iPod stating that the music storage device is not an invention but merely a “brilliant combination of ideas and inventions already extant” (McCracken, 2011).

Entrepreneurs own businesses called entrepreneurships. According to entrepreneurial historian A. David Silver (1985), the term “entrepreneurship” has its origins in sixteenth century France where it defined a military leader (p. 14). Today the term belongs in business instead of the military. To some, the term refers simply to a stage in development, such as the startup stage, but to others the term refers to a specific approach to management (Eisenmann, 2013). Harvard Business School (HBS) professor, Thomas Eisenmann (2013), provides the Howard H. Stevenson definition of an entrepreneurship in his article entitled Entrepreneurship: A Working

Definition. Stevenson is referred to as the “godfather of entrepreneurship studies at HBS” (Eisenmann, 2013). He defines entrepreneurship as “the pursuit of opportunity beyond resources controlled” (Eisenmann, 2013). This definition is subsequently broken down into three components for discussion: “pursuit,” “opportunity,” and “beyond resources controlled.” Pursuit implies a chase of something, which the author terms a “singular, relentless focus” (Eisenmann, 2013). Entrepreneurships have a strong dedication to the purpose of their existence. For if there is no purpose, then there is no need for the business. The “opportunity” component speaks heavily on how this business will set itself apart from other firms. The opportunity may encompass:

- 1) Pioneering a truly innovative product
- 2) Devising a new business model
- 3) Creating a better or cheaper version of an existing product
- 4) Targeting an existing product to new sets of customers (Eisenmann, 2013)

“Beyond resources controlled” refers to limited resources. The word “beyond” is appropriate here because entrepreneurships are often freed from many constraints because they “bootstrap” meaning that they have unaided effort. By working this way they keep costs low and limit their use of personal funds. It is the entrepreneurs’ hope that these measures will be adequate until the business creates cash flow of its own. This fact exhibits why entrepreneurs and entrepreneurships are considered to carry considerable risk (Eisenmann, 2013).

## The History of Entrepreneurship and the Entrepreneur

After perusing all of these definitions and opinions of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurships, however, it is important to remember that these terms and their usage to describe people and their work have not always been in existence. After reviewing history, it seems that cottage industries were the first entrepreneurships to appear. A cottage industry is defined as “an industry whose labor force consists of family units or individuals working at home with their own equipment” (“Cottage industry,” n.d.). This type of business occurs in an individual’s home or on the individual’s property and is run by the family members. Just like any other type of entrepreneurship, these businesses provide either products or services that are sold directly to customers. These products and services are often unique to the particular family and, due to limited resources, are not mass-produced.

### Cottage industries and the domestic system.

Although present throughout history, cottage industries were the most prevalent prior to the Industrial Revolution, which began in Great Britain in the early to mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. Initially these early entrepreneurs were men who worked as tradesmen and artisans, but they were also housewives who tatted, knitted, crocheted, or sewed to help boost the family’s income. During the colonial era in the United States, these industries thrived off of the land where they were located (Wyatt, 2009, p. 1, 3, 102). I reviewed one man’s story of his own cottage industry, which his father started in 1925. Just like any other business, each family member had a role to carry out. The father held the position of CEO; the mother was the treasurer, communications director, and assisted in production; the daughter was the production assistant and oversaw the purchasing and inventory controls; and the son was the assembly line coordinator, in-house transportation director, and, after becoming old enough to be licensed, became part of the

delivery network. In cottage industries we see businesses that utilize every family member for the success of the business and which generate capital for one family. Cottage industries like this one are indeed small and bound by the limited resources of the household, but they produce high-quality goods and services and have been a vital way of conducting business throughout history (“Cottage industry,” n.d.; “Cottage industries,” n.d.; “Domestic system,” n.d.; “The domestic system,” n.d.).

Similar to the cottage industry is the domestic system (or putting-out system). Like the cottage industry, the work in the domestic system is carried out in the homes of individuals. However, in the domestic system, merchant-employers bring the raw materials to the workers. The workers then use the raw materials to complete their task, and then return the finished product to the merchant-employers so that they can be paid for their services (“Domestic system,” n.d.). In this type of business, the workers were neither responsible for obtaining raw materials nor selling the final product. Here we see an improvement in the efficiency of business dealings since the household workers are not as limited in raw materials. They are, however, still limited in human resources. Both the cottage industry and the domestic system were the early forms of manufacturing and essential ways of conducting business before the Industrial Revolution (“Domestic system,” n.d.; “Domestic system [economics],” n.d.; “The domestic system,” n.d.; Wyatt, 2009, p. 101-102).

### [The Industrial Revolution.](#)

Historians have varying opinions about when, where and why the Industrial Revolution happened, but I have found that historians are in agreement that before our world became industrialized, business was dominated by either cottage industries or the domestic system. As explained above, both of these methods of conducting business were without large, complicated

machinery and, therefore, were lacking in the ability to mass-produce. Although dated, Duncan Bythell (1983), contributor to the History Today magazine, wrote an interesting article on the differences between businesses in the pre and post Industrial Revolution periods. Here we see a transition in business from individual cottages using common, household tools to large, employer-owned factories full of machinery inventions capable of mass-producing items that at one time could only be hand-made. In this era we see the emergence of the “boss” or “overseer.” No longer is the patriarch of the family the one in charge of the family’s capital, workers are now at the beck and call of their employers (Bythell, 1983).

Cottage industries gradually dwindled as machines in factories replaced skilled workers in homes. Family members (even children) were forced into factory work by the demand for products. Consumers no longer wanted expensive, handmade items that took days or weeks to prepare; they wanted items faster and cheaper. It was not until the Industrial Revolution that mass production was even possible, and when it was, production went full steam ahead. Machines and other inventions were certainly useful to America, Britain, and the rest of the world, but they were not without their problems. In his article on the Industrial Revolution, Bythell (1983) states that these problems were even manifest in the literature of that time, such as the deleterious work and living conditions in Britain displayed throughout Charles Dickens’ novel *Oliver Twist*. These technological improvements certainly improved the standard of living for some, such as the people who owned or managed the factories; however, for the poor and working class families who were employed in the factories, they led to dangerous work conditions and minimal pay (Bythell, 1983; Wyatt, 2009). Bythell goes so far to say that the Industrial Revolution “brutally displaced” the cottage industry, saying that “...the common man

was certainly happier, even if he was materially worse off, than his grandson” (Bythell, 1983, p. 18).

Wealth imbalances and poor working conditions were not the only concerns with the spread of the Industrial Revolution. Before the Industrial Revolution, artisans – like weavers – working from their homes were the dominant producers of consumer goods, but after the Industrial Revolution, these same workers were the first to attempt to thwart the industrial efforts. These skilled individuals spent their younger years studying as apprentices and their older years as revered artisans. Once independent and self-sufficient, the factory system now genuinely jeopardized their livelihoods. As expected, this created unrest. The British “Luddites” are probably the most infamous for their unrest during this industrial age. During this time they became well known for the various textile machines that they smashed. However, Luddites did not want to rid the world of technology and in actuality were highly skilled in it. They simply wanted trained individuals operating the machines, receiving proper pay, and producing high-quality goods. Even with all the good from this industrial age we see these early entrepreneurs fighting to gain back quality that can only be made by hand (Conniff, 2011; Bythell, 1983; Wyatt, 2009, p. 70)

There was no definite beginning or ending to the Industrial Revolution, but by the 20th century it began to lose its power, and people were becoming more capable and more at ease with leaving the factory system. By this time we see a bit of a shift in typical occupations as it became more common for people to once again branch out into business of their own. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, more individuals performed research in the area entrepreneurship. Economists and business people began to define and examine the entrepreneur to determine whether breaking away from the factory system was a boon or a bane for the economy and society as a whole.

Cottage industries were the entrepreneurial efforts before the Industrial Revolution; they were a way of life vital for the survival of families. However, now we see entrepreneurial efforts as a shift into innovation. Some economists believe this innovation is the driver to economic progress (“In praise of entrepreneurs,” 2007; Llewellyn & Holt, n.d.b).

### Entrepreneurs and economic theory.

Although not the first in this field, Joseph A. Schumpeter, a 20<sup>th</sup> century Austrian economist, performed substantial research on the entrepreneur and its role in the economy. His book *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* brought the entrepreneur back into the focus of economists. Schumpeter had much to say concerning the innovation brought by entrepreneurs. His theory of “creative destruction” is probably his most popular theory on entrepreneurship. Schumpeter realized a need for innovation in order to grow. Schumpeter thought entrepreneurs were heroic in nature because through their efforts they created new industries, disturbed the endlessly looping business cycles, and ultimately drove economic progress. Schumpeter coined the word *unternehmergeist*, which he derived from the original French term for entrepreneur and is translated to English as entrepreneur-spirit. These wild spirits, he says, possess “the dream and the will to found a private kingdom” (as cited in Llewellyn & Holt, n.d.; “In praise of entrepreneurs,” 2007). It is this will for a private kingdom that allows people and economies to leave the old behind and bring in the new (“In praise of entrepreneurs,” 2007; Llewellyn & Holt, n.d.b, para. 8; Silver, 1985, p. 15, Sobel, 2008).

### Inspirational entrepreneurs.

History is full of wild spirits like those that Schumpeter studied during his work as an economist. These individuals may not have invented the wheel like others throughout history, but they certainly had dreams and the will to make a way of their own (“In praise of

entrepreneurs,” 2007). They were able to see the potential in ideas and then implement the ideas in ways that no one ever had before. I perused history from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and found four inspirational entrepreneurs. Henry Ford from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century played a pivotal role in increasing our ability to travel. Gabrielle Bonheur “Coco” Chanel from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century captured the loyalty of people all over the world with her fashion line and perfumes. Steve Jobs (with the help of Steve Wozniak) from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century revolutionized the way we use computers, listen to music, and more.

### *Henry Ford.*

Henry Ford is often referred to as the “quintessential American inventor/entrepreneur” (Anastakis, 2008, p. 120). As the founder of the Ford Motor Company and the mastermind behind assembly line technology, Ford has been ranked as the number one greatest entrepreneur by both the Nation’s Business survey in 1971 and the Business History Review in 2003 (McCormick & Folsom, 2003). Contrary to common belief, Ford was neither the pioneer of the automobile nor the first person to ever create an automobile. He was, however, the person who took the steps to make automobiles an available and affordable mode of transportation. His entrepreneurial efforts in the automobile industry and his innovation with assembly lines granted him millions in profit and international acclaim even to this day (McCarthy, 2002).

### *Gabrielle Bonheur Chanel.*

Gabrielle Bonheur “Coco” Chanel rose above her peasant upbringing to become one of the most popular fashion designers and perfumers around the world. Born in France as an illegitimate daughter, Coco was raised by nuns after her mother succumbed to tuberculosis and her father abandoned her at age twelve. It was in this orphanage that Coco learned how to sew, which would later become vital to her lifelong success. After her rough childhood, Coco strove



for financial independence and began sewing her own line of women's clothing. Coco Chanel clothing challenged the typical garb of the 20<sup>th</sup> century French woman. Coco wanted women to see beyond the corsets and long hemlines and into a different realm of fashion. Coco expected clothes to be both "comfortable and chic" (Arnold, 2012, p. 44), which is why she combined feminine clothing designs with male elements, such as trousers, into her collections. Women raved over Coco's clothing lines and the recognition fueled her success. Along with fashion, Coco also created a perfume, Chanel No. 5, that is still one of the world's most famous perfumes. Even after her death, Coco Chanel is world renown for her business savvy and excellent fashion tastes (Arnold, 2012; Mazzeo, 2010).

#### *Steve Jobs (and Steve Wozniak).*

Steve Jobs (and his friend Steve Wozniak) were self-taught engineers who created one of the most popular, iconoclastic, technology brands, "Apple", in a family garage. Jobs was not the first person to have an idea to create a user-friendly computer, and he was not the first person to come up with an idea about music players or smartphones, but he was the first person to implement them. Jobs spotted potential in ideas and then implemented them in ways that no one had ever dreamed of before. Apple products, whether they be a computer, laptop, iPod, iPhone, iTunes, or otherwise, are featured everywhere. The technological entrepreneurial efforts of Jobs and Wozniak were a stroke of pure genius. Together they revolutionized the way we view technology and the way we communicate with others. Not only are Apple products high quality technological items, but the company also has superior branding and a strong company image making them one of the most popular and easily recognizable brands in the world (Arnold, 2012; Blumenthal, 2012).

### *Aaron Levant.*

Not all of the successful entrepreneurs are in the past, though. Aaron Levant was a rebellious, misbehaving teen that was eventually expelled from high school at the age of sixteen. By age twenty, however, Levant opened “AGENDA” his very own trade-show business, and he never looked back. Like many entrepreneurs, Levant did not seek out entrepreneurship. After high school he received an internship at a fashion showroom. Levant moved quickly from an assistant to a graphic design to launching his own line at the age of nineteen. It was after launching his own clothing line that he realized first-hand how difficult it is to make your brand known. Even when he attended trade-shows to display his brand he was often pushed to the back with all of the other little-known brands. It was then that he realized a need: he wanted to help emerging brands like his succeed (Huspeni, 2013).

Levant then created the AGENDA show, his very own trade show. His trade show was different than the rest, though, in that he put emphasis on newcomers to the industry. Levant is now thirty and his ten-year-old business is a multi-million dollar trade show. I agree with Huspeni (2013) when she said, “Not bad for a high school dropout.” As we can see, entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs have developed through the ages; likewise, we can see the use of entrepreneurs in case studies develop as well. The following section will discuss the structure and use of case studies in literature.

### **The Definition of Case Studies**

Case studies may be classified as either quantitative or qualitative based on the fact that there are two different types of data: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative data is “expressible in terms of quantity” (Quantitative, 2013) meaning that it is data involving numbers. Test scores from a high school classroom are quantitative because they are expressed as

numbers. Qualitative data, however, “relat[es] to, or involve[es] quality or kind” (Qualitative, 2013). An example of qualitative data is gender because gender is a particular human quality and it is not expressed as numbers. Subsequently, there are also two different research approaches that stem from these two types of data: quantitative research and qualitative research. The quantitative approach to research tests “...objective theories by examining the relationship among variables” (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). The variables (numbers) are measured so that the data can be analyzed statistically and then the results are reported in a set structure. On the other hand, the qualitative approach to research explores “...the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). Qualitative studies are exploratory. They shy away from the rigid numerical data analysis understanding the importance of individual meaning as opposed to the concrete results of numbers.

The case study method of research is an excellent example of a research method that utilizes the qualitative research approach and often contains qualitative data. Case studies provide a detailed account of events, people, and factors during a specific period of time and set within a particular context. Yin (2014) calls it an “empirical inquiry.” Not to be confused with fieldwork or an exploratory stage of some other research method, case studies provide in-depth investigation of a case in its real world, real-life context with all of its particular situations and dilemmas. This method contains numerous variables, much more than data points, and therefore needs multiple sources of evidence. A case study is an appropriate research method to use when:

1. The main questions are “how” or “why” questions
2. A researcher has little or no control over behavioral events
3. The focus of study is a contemporary (as opposed to entirely historical) phenomenon (Yin, 2014, p. 2)

Gaining popularity as both a research method and a teaching method, this form of research is a challenging method for the social sciences. Case studies are also found in many fields, such as psychology and business. Business is a common field that uses the case method for both researching and teaching. In the business context, a business case study still chronicles events, but the events, people, and problems specifically apply to managers or the business realm as a whole (Creswell, 2014, p. 14; “How to write,” 2012; Schweitzer, n.d.; Yin, 2014, p. 2-23).

The case study teaching method is particularly potent approach in business schools. Case studies in business classrooms provide students with real-life business dilemmas. By analyzing cases, business students can improve their problem solving skills, participate in hands-on experiences, and build business knowledge while still under the guidance of a learned professor. As evident from the aforementioned definition, case studies take students out of the controlled textbook realm and into real world, real-life situations where things do not always go as planned. Students gain much knowledge from textbook and lecture material, but teachers and researchers are discovering more and more the importance of providing students with hands-on business experience before they leave the classroom and enter a business field. It is important to note, however, that case studies constructed for research purposes and case studies constructed for teaching purposes often differ. It is poor research to display anything but the absolute facts in a research case study, but a teaching case study are often altered in some way in order to make a particular point to the student (“How to write,” 2012; Schweitzer, n.d).

### The Construction of Case Studies

Today more focus is put on constructing educational case studies and finding uses for them in the classroom. Authors of cases are often professors, but may also be an individual outside of a university who is an expert in the intended case’s field. Properly written case studies

speak intelligently and fairly, respecting all parties (businesses, organizations, and people involved). Cases are often opened with a story where the protagonist (or main character), problem, and the context of the situation are explained to the student. This introduction into the case should grab the reader's attention within the first page or two. The rest of the case provides additional characters if necessary, broadens the perspective on the case, and then returns the reader to the original story to close the case. A case study has one principal issue to be handled, decision to be made, or angle to be examined.

The dominant character facing this issue, decision, or angle is the case's protagonist. This protagonist is fully human. He feels pressed for time, makes mistakes, has to work with incomplete information, and has biases just like any other business person out there. This humanity creates empathy and therefore the student wants to do his best to with the particular case. Cases must also have time constraints. In life decisions must be made before a meeting, before a press conference, or before some other event, and cases must work within these realms as well. Writing should be objective, but the biases of the protagonist should be inserted where appropriate to help the student analyze and make the cases final decision (Creswell, 2014; "How to write," 2012; Schweitzer, n.d.; Yin, 2014).

### Case Studies in the Business World

As discussed in the aforementioned paragraphs, business case studies are written for many different purposes. *The Journal of Business Case Studies* offered a case study on The Wine Vault and Bistro restaurant, and it states that the case was written "as the basis for classroom discussion and is not intended to illustrate either effective or ineffective business practices" (St. James, 2010, p. 27). This case study is an instructional case for use in the classroom, but it is not intended for use as a model for a business. Likewise, the *Business Review* offers a case study on

a young, Jordanian entrepreneur who ultimately made his business global (Alsaaty, 2006). Alsaaty (2006) states that the case's intention is to "convey the strategic vision, business expertise, and managerial style of a young Jordanian-born entrepreneur" (p. 178). Although expository as well, this case also has the potential to be instructional to fellow entrepreneurs.

The authors of these cases certainly had different objectives in writing these, but nonetheless they both used similar methodology in their construction. Both cases begin with an introduction. This extra background information informs the reader of basic information that the reader might need to fully understand the case. The introduction for the Wine Vault and Bistro case tells about one of the restaurant's founders in her childhood days to demonstrate that girl loved to make and sell food from an early age. The case on the Jordanian entrepreneur discusses how the young man came to live in the United States and how he received his education. Regardless of objective, both cases offer key information in their first few paragraphs before they move into the body of the case (Alsaaty, 2006; St. James, 2010).

Both cases progress by discussing the protagonists' journey to success. These particular cases move step-by-step through the story by following a chronological order. As is common in these types of case studies, the author discusses not only the protagonist's story, but makes clear the key decisions that he or she made along the way. After the author has reached the present day or an otherwise appropriate stopping point, he will conclude the case. The Wine Vault and Bistro case ends with a summary of the case, and the Jordanian entrepreneur case concludes with a recap on the business' factors to success. Both methods of concluding are appropriate for this type of case study and allow the reader the opportunity to refresh their memories before they mull over the author's discussion questions.

The final paragraph in a case study contains a case's discussion questions. These thought-provoking questions allow the reader to process the material and ultimately make it useful in some way. Without the addition of these questions, cases like these would be mere stories; however, after the addition, readers can then gain the case's full potential. After the discussion questions, it is not uncommon for the author to provide graphics that may be of visual aid to the reader. The Wine Vault and Bistro case provides snapshots of their menu to help readers understand even better what the bistro has to offer. Although some cases can become complex, many, like the two discussed here, are simplistic and easy to follow in their methodology providing a great boon to those willing to read and discuss their material (Alsaaty, 2006; St. James, 2010).

## CHAPTER 3: Research Methodology

To properly construct the HorseFeathers Gifts case study, primary data will be gathered through a series of in-person interviews of the business' owners: Chelsea Farmer and Tammy Asher Morse. An initial ten questions will be composed and reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to determine if approval is needed for this case study research (see Appendices "A" and "B"). A total of forty-four questions will be prepared to ensure that the broadest amount of information is obtained during the interview process (see Appendix "C"). The intention of the interview questions is to gather a full history of both the business and the business' owners.

HorseFeathers' two owners will both be present during the interviews, and the interviews will be conducted at the business' world headquarters in Henderson, Kentucky over a two-day period. Answers to interview questions and follow-up questions will be recorded via a digital recorder and later transcribed into a Word document format by Alice Terrell (see Appendix "D"). Prior to writing the case, all sections of the interview will be analyzed by studying key events and decisions made in HorseFeathers' history concerning their entrepreneurial success and arranging those events and decisions in chronological order (see Appendix "E").

The Ross School of Business from the University of Michigan compiled a document entitled "How to Write a Case Study" which will aid in the construction of the HorseFeathers case study (see Appendix "F"). This document covers in detail what business case studies are, how they are used, and how to construct, market, and publish them. Although the authors of this instructional document focus more on business cases used in the classroom, it is applicable to academic business cases like this one as well. The methodology presented in this document for



case structure and case writing will be used extensively throughout the construction of the HorseFeathers case. Two possible uses for business case studies, case structure, and the case-writing process are presented here in detail as discussed in the previously mentioned document and as a demonstration of the methodology that will be used for the HorseFeathers case study (“How to write,” 2012).

The aforementioned Ross School of Business’ case-writing document begins by referencing a comparison table for business and academic case studies (“How to write, 2012, p. 16). This is important to consider because the HorseFeathers case will be a business case study that is academic in nature, which means that the method used to construct it will differ somewhat from the typical business case study mentioned in the document. Here it is explained that whereas a typical business case study is often used for teaching purposes, academic cases, like the one intended for this thesis, are exploratory and not constructed for use the classroom. This case will have a broad scope with no definite decision point; it will be merely a detailed investigation of the business in question to determine causation of success-enhancing principles. The point of view will be detached creating no bias. Instead of constructing the case around learning objectives and providing a teaching note to users, this case will be built around the hypothesis that a particular entrepreneurial personality aids in success or failure in the various stages of business. This case will be supported by the analysis of the interviews, and the case’s findings will be summarized in the conclusion of the case, which can be found in chapter 6 of this thesis (“How to write,” 2012).

Because various authors write case studies, they all display a personalized writing style; however, they all require a definite structure. As discussed in the Ross School of Business case study document, this structure includes a title, introductory paragraphs, background on the

business, and a conclusion. As will be evident, the HorseFeathers case study follows this structure as well. The title of a case allows readers to quickly absorb the case's main idea and should be no more than ten words in length. The introduction is the quintessential part of the case. It usually ranges from one half to two or more pages in length. In the introduction the author introduces the reader to the protagonist and other key players in the case. The introduction also sets the timeframe of the case, discusses the purpose of the business in question, and the ultimate goal of the protagonist. This is called the case's context and it is vital to the analysis of the case ("How to write," 2012).

The background sections of the case set the readers' expectations for the way that the case should be analyzed and solved. This part of the case tends to be the longest part ranging from three to seven (or more) pages in length. Headings and subheadings are used throughout these cases for clarity, and the business' information is often organized chronologically. Occasionally extraneous information about the business or the protagonist is added to this part of the case to make solving the case more involved; however, the HorseFeathers case will contain no extraneous interview materials. Here the author discusses the challenges and responsibilities of the business and, at his discretion, may discuss the culture of business to aid the reader. Here it is important to discuss alternatives available to the protagonist such as "Should I sell this business?" or "Should I hire more employees than just myself?" In the instance of this case, the information in this part of the case will give the reader the background needed to answer questions about future growth ("How to write," 2012).

The conclusion to the case is usually the shortest of the case's sections; it is typically two to three paragraphs in length. In a typical case study the author would revisit the information provided in the case, but refrain from drawing any conclusions so that the reader can solve

problems and draw conclusions on their own. In a business case study that is more academic in nature, such as the HorseFeathers case, the conclusion chapter summarizes the findings of the case.

The final components to a business case study are the exhibits and the endnotes, which typically range from one to ten pages in length. Exhibits allow the case author to display information that is not necessarily relevant to the case, but is helpful to the reader. According to the authors of “How to write a case study” (2012), exhibits could involve “financial statements, timelines, diagrams, charts, tables, pictures, [or] graphs” (p.5). In special cases an exhibit may be a link to a video of an interview with the protagonist. Each exhibit is titled individually. Endnotes give the reader extra information about the source of certain quotations or facts that the reader may find necessary. All endnotes in the document employ the American Psychological Association (APA) format (“How to write,” 2012).

After the research (the analysis of the interviews) for the HorseFeathers case are completed, the case structure is understood, and all ideas are compiled into a structured outline, the writing of the case will begin. The first draft of the case will not be confused with a rough draft. Although during this draft there were still questions to be answered by the professor mentoring this project, the first draft will be well structured and the company’s information will flow logically from one stage of the business’ development to another. The draft will be free from spelling and grammar mistakes and all references, citations, and endnotes will be completed. The rule of thumb “Edit, edit, edit” (“How to write,” 2012) will be applied and the draft will be read through three times before being submitted to the thesis mentoring professor for perusal. Any changes suggested by the mentor will be made during the second draft of the case. During this draft all questions will be answered and the case will be free from errors. After

this stage the HorseFeathers case study will be ready for publication in this thesis (“How to write,” 2012).

## CHAPTER 4: Research Analysis

Two weeks after submitting documents concerning the HorseFeathers Gifts case study to the Institutional Review Board (IRB), it was determined that formal approval was not necessary for the research to take place (see Appendix “B”). In total forty-four interview questions were prepared to gather the broadest amount of information about the business and its owners (see Appendix “C”). The interviews of HorseFeathers’ two owners, Chelsea Farmer and Tammy Asher Morse, were conducted in-person at the business’ world headquarters in Henderson, Kentucky over a two-day period. Responses to the interview questions were recorded via a digital recorder and, upon completion of the interview process, delivered to transcriptionist Alice Terrell for transcribing. One month after being delivered to transcriptionist Terrell, a transcription of the interviews was completed and in Word document format. An edited version of that transcription can be found in Appendix “D” of this manuscript. The transcript was edited for redundancy, expletives, and overall sentence structure to make reading and comprehension easier.

Following the transcription of the interviews, an analysis of the key events in HorseFeathers’ history and decisions made by its owners was conducted by reading through the transcription, studying the information, and then arranging the information (in chronological order) in a detailed outline beginning with biographical information on Tammy Asher Morse followed by similar information on her daughter Chelsea Farmer. The remainder of the outline follows the story of how HorseFeathers was birthed and then nurtured into the thriving business that it is today. The sequence of the events and decisions made in HorseFeathers history was determined based on information presented in the interviews, research conducted on the

business, and email conversation with the founder and co-owner Chelsea Farmer. The chronological order of the information presented in the case is accurate to the best of my knowledge. The outline compiled from the interview transcription can be found in Appendix “E.”

The document on case study writing compiled by the Ross School of Business from the University of Michigan was instrumental in both the planning and construction phases of the HorseFeathers case study. This academic case study is a detailed investigation of this business, built around the hypothesis that successful entrepreneurs share key personality traits, and supported by the information contained in the interviews conducted. This case study contains a definite structure of a concise but informative title, introductory paragraphs to capture the readers’ attention, background on the business’ history, and conclusions. The conclusions about this hypothesis and other findings concerning the research conducted on this business can be found in chapter six of this manuscript (“How to Write, 2012). A copy of the Ross School of Business case-writing document can be found in Appendix “F.”

The actual writing of the case study began after case structure was understood (based on the aforementioned case-writing document) and the detailed outline was constructed from the interview transcription. The first draft of the case study was thorough, well structured, and flowed logically from one stage in the business’ development to the next. The names of individuals mentioned in both the outline and the case – except for the names of the business’ owners – have been changed to protect the individuals’ privacy. This draft was not confused with a rough draft. This draft was thoroughly edited for spelling and grammar mistakes, contained all necessary references, citations, and endnotes, and was read through three times before being

submitted to the mentoring professor for perusal. Any additional changes were made before publishing the case in this thesis.

## CHAPTER 5: Case Study

“Chelsea, I know engineering classes will be hard for you, but think about all that you could accomplish with that degree. The degree will open up many more doors for your career! I know you’re worried about all of the math classes, but I would just hate to see you throw this aside because it’s difficult. And you know I, and your mom, and all of your family want what is best for you, right? That’s why we have been encouraging you to get this degree.

I guess the real question isn’t what do we think is best for your life, though --- what do you want to do with your life, Chelsea?”

“Grant, I don’t care about engineering. I don’t care about my job at Preferred Tank and Tower. I don’t care about how much they say they need me there! I want to make jewelry, Grant! I want to make jewelry for the rest of my life.”

With that Grant smiled, hugged his wife tightly, and stepped gently out of the room. Although, the look in her eyes and the determination in her voice told him that she was resolved about leaving engineering school, he knew that Chelsea needed some space to think through what he had said. He gave her the rest of the day to think about her decision. Right then and there with tears in her eyes Chelsea made up her mind to find a way to make her jewelry business work.

“I don’t know what I’ll do if this doesn’t work,” Chelsea said quietly to herself. “I’m going to make this work!”



## Introduction

Chelsea's mother, Tammy, did not pursue a college education either. In Tammy's family there was little emphasis put on bettering oneself through education. As the daughter of a stay-at-home mother and a farmer, Tammy felt pressured early on to make her own way in life; her plan for making her own way was simply to pick a job with the aim of making at least \$8 an hour. After Tammy graduated from high school she considered pursuing an education in photography, but decided that she did not want to take additional classes simply to take pictures. Instead she attended Kodak seminars and other workshops to improve her photography skills independently.

Before long, Tammy was married and soon they brought Chelsea into the world. Chelsea's dad was in the military, which gave them both the opportunity to travel throughout the United States and overseas. During this time Tammy was able to use her photography skills to make some extra money in the towns where they were stationed. She managed to find work wherever Chelsea's dad moved them. She found that the travel opened her eyes to the world and gave her many new experiences. Tammy knew, however, that she wanted a better life for Chelsea. With that goal in mind, Tammy moved Chelsea to Omaha, Nebraska where Chelsea attended high school and was afforded a strong education. When Chelsea graduated from high school, Tammy and Chelsea moved to Kentucky where they began a new life together.

With new opportunities came new challenges. With Chelsea just having graduated from high school and both being new to the area, employment for both mother and daughter was a necessity. In 2008, despite her lack of a formal education, Tammy pursued and received a position as a project manager at Preferred Tank and Tower Inc., which specializes in water and storage tanks. Chelsea later opted to pursue a job with the same company and by the summer of 2009 was hired on as an inspection manager. Although young, Chelsea excelled in this position.

No matter whom she was communicating with or where they were located she was capable and confident in her tasks. She was constantly looking for new ways to improve various aspects of the company and genuinely wanted what was best for the business. Managers claimed that Chelsea worked so efficiently that if she were ever to leave, they would have to hire several people to replace her to get the same amount of work accomplished. Although skilled in her position, Chelsea became restless and ready to pursue something she was more passionate about.

Chelsea's passion lay somewhere unusual. When Chelsea was a child, Tammy bought Chelsea sets of Pony Beads and she would sit contentedly for hours stringing the chunky, brightly colored beads into bracelets, necklaces, and rings. As Chelsea matured, her love of jewelry making continued to grow with her, and by the age of 16 Chelsea was offered a part-time job at her favorite jewelry store in Omaha: Beads Etc. The position was simplistic, but fit Chelsea's interests perfectly. That was the first opportunity that she had to be paid to do what she loved the most. There was nothing that Chelsea was more passionate about than jewelry.

To counteract the unsettled feelings at work, Chelsea pursued her love for jewelry more intently. She opened up a shop on Etsy.com so that she could bring some of her jewelry to the retail environment (see Exhibit #1 – Etsy.com). Etsy.com is an online store that allows people to both buy and sell handmade items like jewelry and clothing. In order to set up a shop on Etsy, sellers are required to state the shop's name. Chelsea wanted the name of her shop to be creative and that would both stick in customers' minds and make them wonder what her shop really was. Thus, HorseFeathers Gifts was born. Horse feathers are the long hairs on the back of horses' legs. Chelsea felt that the name fit with the rural area in which they lived and the free-spirited nature of her personality. Chelsea had occasional sales on Etsy and the online store provided a distraction from the parts of her job that she did not enjoy.

The summer passed and Chelsea, dismayed by the inadequate pay from her inspection manager position, decided to leave Preferred Tank and Tower to pursue an engineering degree from Ivy Tech Community College. Engineering was not a field that she particularly liked, but it did provide better career options. Her family encouraged her to continue, but ultimately after a discussion with her husband she decided that engineering was not what she wanted for her life and that she wanted devote her time and energy to jewelry making.

After leaving engineering school behind, Chelsea enrolled at the Gemological Institute of America where she received a jeweler's education through distance learning. She then began to create her jewelry full-time so that she could participate in local jewelry shows. This was a difficult step for Chelsea. Her extended family did not believe that jewelry making was a viable working position and since she had not been living in the area for long, she was unaware of the best places to sell her jewelry and make known her business. One fact she did know, though, was that with her job at Preferred Tank and Tower was behind her, her degree from the Gemological Institute of America obtained, her husband by her side, and a heart-centered career ahead of her, she could do anything. Adventure was out there waiting for Chelsea.

### [HorseFeathers Gifts – Studio 107 Morganfield, Kentucky](#)

Soon after Chelsea resolved to engender a jewelry-making business of her own, she became aware of a shop nearby in Morganfield, Kentucky called Studio 107. The studio housed a photographer named Aubrey and an artist named Stacy, and there was the potential that Chelsea would be able to sell her wares in their studio for no extra charge. This would allow Chelsea to sell online through Etsy.com, at jewelry shows, and in a bricks and mortar location. Before long plans to simply allow Chelsea to use their retail space were moot and Chelsea was

given her own studio in Studio 107 where she had space to construct and sell her jewelry as well as an opportunity to share her creative talents by teaching children art.

Chelsea formed an instant bond with Aubrey. They made excellent friends and worked well together. Aubrey used her photography skills to help Chelsea improve the quality of her pictures on Etsy and Chelsea taught Aubrey's kids how to paint and make jewelry. Despite the camaraderie, though, Studio 107 was not a good retail location. The studio fit well for a photographer, but potential jewelry customers often breezed past the door. A jewelry store needed a storefront to display its wares. Chelsea decided that if she wanted to grow, then she would have to find a more ideal location

### HorseFeathers Gifts – Morganfield, Kentucky

Aubrey indicated that a building across the parking lot from Studio 107 was available for lease. This building had an ideal amount of workspace for assembling and shipping the jewelry as well as ample storefront for their displays. This step, however, contained significant risk for the business. Sales online and in store were just beginning to pick up, and regardless of the level of sales revenue Chelsea would still be responsible for paying the year-long lease she was required to sign and other bills associated with the business. Chelsea self-financed all of HorseFeather's expenses determined that the business would not only break even, but eventually create a profit. To Chelsea growth is about taking chances.

To help make this profit a reality, Chelsea chose to pursue a logo for the business (see Exhibit #2 – Logo). Chelsea approached another photographer friend of hers about freehand drawing the business a logo; she agreed and the logo that she designed is the same logo used by the business today. A logo assisted the business in brand recognition and allowed Chelsea to use a consistent picture of the business on their business cards, shopping bags, and other marketing

pieces. Having a logo for the business also allowed Chelsea to stamp certain pieces of jewelry with their identifying mark.

During this time another significant change happened within HorseFeathers. Tammy left her position at Preferred Tank and Tower and joined Chelsea full-time as her business partner. Regardless of Chelsea's past successes with the business, many close to Chelsea and Tammy were unsupportive of their efforts and strove to discourage them from taking this big step with the business. Unshaken by their discouragement, Chelsea became the driving force of HorseFeathers Gifts.

#### [HorseFeathers on Facebook](#)

Chelsea realized soon that although having a brick and mortar location was important for their business, an online appearance was equally if not more important in this age of technology. She created an online fan page for HorseFeathers on Facebook.com a popular social media site (see Exhibit #3 – Facebook.com). Facebook instantly became an excellent tool for the business. It informed customers of products, hosted contests for customers to win jewelry, advertised their shows and other business happenings, and allowed the customers to interact one-on-one with the business owner. Through Facebook Chelsea helped future and current customers feel a personal connection with the business.

#### [HorseFeatherGifts.com](#)

Etsy.com accomplished this initial goal of selling jewelry to customers online, but soon Chelsea felt that HorseFeathers needed its own website to offer a complete online appearance and communicate that they have a professional business (see Exhibit #4 – HorseFeathersGifts.com). Here she could show the true personality of the business. Etsy allowed

customers to shop online in HorseFeather's store, but ultimately it was simply too easy for customers to jump to another person's shop with even the tiniest careless click of the mouse. Chelsea received no formal education in web design, but her self-motivated and self-learning personality fueled her to find out how to design their webpage on her own. She began by looking at the webpages of other online retailers that she found to be aesthetically pleasing. By looking at those webpages, she determined which webhosts she preferred. After choosing a webhost, she chose the cheapest template that would still allow the functions that her business needed. She then used Google, YouTube, Weblogs, and observations from larger online companies for ideas and guidance. Soon the website was up and running and Chelsea began to post more jewelry and accessories for sale.

The ability to use Adobe Photoshop software to edit and manipulate the business' photography became evident to Chelsea during the website construction, but she was unwilling to purchase the software. She performed a Google search to determine if a similar free software was available and ended up finding the GNU Image Manipulation Program (GIMP for short), which allows users to do all of the same functions as Adobe Photoshop but for free.

HorseFeathers photography stood out against that of the competition because of the creative touches and intimate feel. Through Chelsea's motivation to figure out web design and photo editing, the business was able to make another significant step in the growth and acceleration of the business.

### Competition and Growth

With HorseFeathers' increasing exposure, Chelsea took the initiative to find more jewelry shows for the business to participate in. She did not fear rejection and approached any and every opportunity that she felt would make HorseFeathers better known. Through their participation in

shows their customer level increased, but they also gained the ability to participate in wholesale opportunities. Wholesale orders allowed them to sell the jewelry in more bricks and mortar locations and increase the income of the business. Sales to individual customers were often inconsistent at shows, but one wholesale order often brought the company more than \$1000 in revenue at one time.

However, every good idea attracts those who are too lazy to come up with their own. HorseFeathers success created a new challenge for the owners: copycats. Individuals around the country were observing the designs and styling of HorseFeathers jewelry and accessories, creating similar pieces, then selling them on their own Etsy sites and websites for a much discounted price. To help combat copying Chelsea put effort into working with a local designer who hand-drew the pictures and sayings used for their metal and multipurpose stamps. This competition motivated Chelsea to come up with even more great ideas for the business. As others copy their designs, they change their product line to keep the jewelry fresh and exciting. This is why customers can seldom find the same pieces twice, which keeps them consistently coming back looking for new items to add to their collection. Chelsea understood that she did not reinvent the wheel, but she did find a way to make the wheel her very own.

HorseFeathers initial growth, however, was not without complications. Although mastering business related concepts such as tax identification numbers and business licensing was a difficult task for both Chelsea and Tammy to wade through on their own, they did not opt to involve professionals in these matters. Since the business was becoming increasingly busy, Chelsea assumed that they could figure out those aspects later and pushed the issues aside for the time being. Initially HorseFeathers was registered under the wrong tax identification number. When Tammy realized the mistake she immediately tried to correct it by obtaining another

identification number, but the original number was mistakenly retained. Thus when Tammy licensed HorseFeathers as a Limited Liability Company (LLC), two LLC's were created instead of just one. The two registered LLC's caused the Internal Revenue Service to view one of the businesses as trying to avoid paying taxes, which in turn generated collection notices. HorseFeathers ended up paying their taxes twice to relieve the burden. From that point on professionals were hired to handle all accounting and legal matters.

Location certainly is key when it comes to business, but a good location is not limited to visibility or availability to customers; it also applies to the soundness of the physical structure. The building housing HorseFeathers flooded frequently and Chelsea and Tammy decided that it was time to move on. Morganfield was far away from both of their homes and although the business was doing well online and with wholesale, the shop was not as busy as they wanted it. They talked with their friend Becky who owned a flower gift shop next door and she told them that if they would sell her all of the things in their store, then she would take care of the rest of their lease and let them walk away. Within two weeks, Chelsea and Tammy had sold almost everything in their store and walked away from their very first bricks and mortar location to pursue bigger and better things with HorseFeathers.

### HorseFeathers Gifts – Chelsea and Tammy's Homes

HorseFeathers was then split between Chelsea and Tammy's homes. Although dividing the business between two locations made coordination more difficult, this step allowed both owners to focus on the creation of the jewelry instead of running the boutique. By this time, online sales from HorseFeathers were steadily increasing and wholesale orders were becoming more and more common, so they used the time devoted to the store to complete the orders.



Chelsea used her creative skills that were not dedicated to jewelry creation to create the business' marketing pieces such as billboards and newspaper ads. It was important to Chelsea that she created all of the marketing pieces to ensure that the business' personality was throughout each piece. Again she observed the marketing pieces of other companies to gain inspiration of her own and then used Google and YouTube to guide her through the design process. She was particularly fond of Tiffany and Co.'s billboards and used similar simplicity when designing her billboards. Throughout the design and printing process she refused to allow any of her advertisements to be printed in black and white and claimed that the lack of color would never be effective for a jewelry store.

Even more dedicated to the success and growth of HorseFeathers since the recent move, Chelsea used her time on Facebook wisely. She paid attention to those that became fans of the business' page as well as the pages of others businesses that appeared nearby. Using these scanning methods, Chelsea located a young woman in California named Alice. Alice works as a freelance writer and had posted about her services online. Although Chelsea was unwilling to hire a full-time writer because of the associated costs, she was also unwilling to do the writing herself. Alice soon became the author of all of the written materials on the HorseFeathers website and then used her connections to gain more media opportunities. Because of Alice, Chelsea was featured as one of Martha Stewart's "Doers of the Week" in 2012.

A similar experience online afforded HorseFeathers the opportunity to attend the 84<sup>th</sup> Oscar Academy Awards Talent Suite. Through a Facebook promoted giveaway, Chelsea met a woman named Jessie who owns a body care business in San Diego, California. As Jessie was promoting her own business, she gained much experience with celebrity gifting suites and used her experience to put in a good word for HorseFeathers to participate too. The Oscar Academy

Awards Talent Suite is an event that allows up-and-coming entrepreneurs to display their wares to celebrities. Surprisingly, HorseFeathers was invited to attend. Chelsea and Tammy packed up the best of their jewelry and made the long journey from Kentucky to California. They were unsure of what to expect from the adventure, but ultimately the experiences allowed them a degree of business exposure that they never would have had otherwise.

Yet again because of Chelsea's dedication to the business's social media page, they were invited to be interviewed by Fox News. One of Fox News employees was a fan of HorseFeathers on Facebook and saw that Chelsea and Tammy were attending the Oscar Academy Awards Talent Suite. The employee encouraged her bosses to interview them about their experience at the Talent Suite. The following day Chelsea and Tammy sat on national television and told the world about their business and the experience of mingling with celebrities. Once again Facebook helped HorseFeathers to grow.

Quality and heart-centered work was always important to both Chelsea and Tammy. For this reason they decided not to pursue an opportunity to be featured on the hit television show Shark Tank. Shark Tank allows budding entrepreneurs to pitch their ideas to a panel of self-made millionaires and billionaires. The point of the reality show is to secure one of the panel members as an investor, so that you too can make your business and yourself big. Investors featured on Shark Tank also offer contestants the opportunity to sell their business and leave all of their rights to it behind.

Chelsea and Tammy decided that regardless of the amount of money that they could have gained from being on Shark Tank, none of the investors would view their business like they did. To the investors, their business would just be jewelry. Also, the investors encourage outsourcing. Chelsea did not want any parts of their business to be outsourced because quality was a high

priority to them both. Her goal for starting the business never was to make a larger paycheck; the business existed because it was her passion and no one would ever care as much as she did about HorseFeathers Gifts.

Chelsea understood the importance of seizing an opportunity. When she found an opportunity to have HorseFeathers featured in a magazine or other article she moved quickly to contact and send them samples of her work. When *Green Living Magazine* wanted to feature their eco-friendly silk wrap bracelets, they needed samples of their work the very next day, so Chelsea overnighted the samples and was later rewarded for her initiative by being featured in the very next issue. Through similar impulsive choices, HorseFeathers also received exposure on Tory Johnson's "Deals and Steals" and in *OK! Magazine*. Chelsea saw every opportunity as a "maybe" until that opportunity was either a definite "yes" or "no." Chelsea was persistent in all of her efforts, which helped HorseFeathers grow even more. Before long online sale and wholesale orders increased so much that once again Chelsea and Tammy realized that not only did they need a bigger location, they also needed a location together.

### HorseFeathers Gifts – Henderson, Kentucky

A little after a year of doing business out of their perspective homes Chelsea and Tammy decided to go out and look for a building to rent in downtown Henderson, Kentucky. They found one with plenty of studio space and an ample display case in the front. It even had a turquoise ceiling. They fell in love with the place. The goal for this move was to have a larger studio space where they could work together and a space up front for customers to pick up custom-made orders.

Like any other step that HorseFeathers made this new location had risks. Each new store had a new workload and new risks. They never had a business loan and they never intended to

have one, but they were well aware that regardless of whether anything in the store sold they would still be responsible for paying the lease and all the other expenses incurred by operating the physical building. Also, the proposed move in date was April meaning that they would miss key holidays like Christmas and Valentine's day, which would have helped boost initial sales.

However, on the first day that they moved in Chelsea received a message on Facebook from a group asking if they could have a private jewelry party in the newly opened store. Although, the studio part of the boutique was not fully ready, Chelsea and Tammy set up folding chairs and hosted a private party for these individuals. HorseFeathers received excellent word of mouth marketing from that endeavor. Those who attended felt like they had made an amicable connection with the business to such a degree that they felt the need to spread the positive vibe. After that first day customers were not only flooding into their online store, but into their physical store as well.

It was important to Chelsea and Tammy that customers have multiple reasons to shop with them. They put emphasis on being themselves in their business dealings instead of putting forth a formal business appearance. They found that customers like it when they form a relationship with them. They believe that a customer's connections with them as a person prompts them to buy, buy often, and to tell others about their experience. They believe that this creates true customer loyalty. Chelsea and Tammy also put emphasis on sustainability by making HorseFeathers into a Platinum member of the Green Business Bureau and on supporting local economies by adding their store to the others downtown.

### Present Day – Henderson, Kentucky

Ultimately their store in Henderson, Kentucky became so popular that Chelsea hired an employee to work up front with customers, so that she and Tammy could work in the back.

HorseFeathers thrives online, in stores, and overseas. They sell in seven different countries including France, South Africa, Canada, Ireland, Istanbul, and the United Kingdom.


HorseFeathers never wishes to franchise. Chelsea and Tammy simply wish to empower women everywhere to be themselves and chase their dreams.

### Discussion Questions:

1. What kind of person is Chelsea? What is her personality?
2. What kind of person is Tammy? What is her personality?
3. Did Chelsea/Tammy's personality affect HorseFeather's growth? If so, was it a positive or negative effect?
4. Are the steps that Chelsea and Tammy took with HorseFeathers applicable to other businesses besides those in the jewelry and accessory industry?
5. Without Tammy's influence would Chelsea have pulled HorseFeathers out of their legal issues with Tax ID numbers and LLC's?

# Exhibit #1 – Etsy.com

Sell Registry Community Blogs Mobile Gift Cards Help


**Etsy** Register Sign In Search for items and shops Search  Cart

Home > horsefeathersgifts

### Shop Sections

- Shop home 172 items
- Silk Wrap Bracelets 51
- Inspirational Bracelets 32
- Leather Bracelets 2
- Eco Friendly Pendant 23
- Vintage Earrings 27
- Personalized Rings 3
- Mood Rings 4
- Brass Charm Necklace 11
- Add Ons 10
- WHOLESALE Jewelry 6

### Shop Owner






**Chelsea Farmer**  
Handmade in the USA

## horsefeathers

horsefeathersgifts  
Eco Friendly Inspirational Jewels + Gifts Favorite Like 33k

Unique Handmade in America. Eco-friendly jewelry featuring original silk wrap bracelets, wax seal pendant, custom pet and fingerprint keepsakes and hand stamped jewelry. Wholesale handmade jewelry available... [read more](#)

 This shop accepts Etsy Gift Cards.

Search in this shop Search Sort by: Custom  

### FEATURED ITEMS FROM HORSEFEATHERSGIFTS





 <p>SALE Sideways Cross Brac... horsefeathe... <b>\$41.60 USD</b></p>	 <p>SALE Love You to The Moon ... horsefeathe... <b>\$41.60 USD</b></p>	 <p>SALE Ecofriendly, Stars and ... horsefeathe... <b>\$33.60 USD</b></p>	 <p>SALE Silk Wrap Bracelet, Ad... horsefeathe... <b>\$33.60 USD</b></p>
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Exhibit #2 - Logo



# Exhibit #3 – Facebook.com

**HorseFeathers Gifts** Search

Kady Home Profile



 **HorseFeathers Gifts**  
4.3 ★★★★★ (450 ratings)  
33,933 likes · 1,294 talking about this · 29 were here

Jewelry Store  
Shop: [www.horsefeathersgifts.com](http://www.horsefeathersgifts.com)  
Blog: [www.horsefeathersgiftsblog.com](http://www.horsefeathersgiftsblog.com)  
Get 10% off with code FBFAN!!!

About – Suggest an Edit

Photos Etsy Shop Instagram feed Pinterest 3

Highlights

**Post** **Photo / Video**

Write something on HorseFeathers Gifts's Page...

**HorseFeathers Gifts**  
6 hours ago

**11 Friends**  
Connected to HorseFeathers Gifts

**11 friends like this**



**1 friend was here**



## Exhibit #4 – HorseFeathersGifts.com



### Look Good. Feel Good. Do Good.

It only takes one person to make a change that can impact the future. With every purchase made we donate to the Arbor Day Foundation, The ASPCA and The Hands & Feet Project. Your purchase makes a difference.

## CHAPTER 6: Conclusions and Future Research

I gleaned the most about HorseFeathers Gift's pathway to success from the writing of the HorseFeathers Gifts case study. The writing of the case certainly allowed me to consolidate my findings, but it was through the conduction of the interviews, the analyzing of the transcription, and the construction of the case's outline that the answer to my hypothesis was made manifest. I discovered that as a dominant player in the birth and growth of HorseFeathers Gifts, Chelsea Farmer's personality played a key role in the business' success. As displayed by the case itself, HorseFeathers made an impressive transformation from a stress-relieving hobby to a thriving international jewelry business in a little over four years.

From the case writing process, I first discovered what success in entrepreneurship is not. Success in entrepreneurship is not having great riches or procuring significant funding, since HorseFeathers has grown from birth to present day through self-funding entirely and without a single loan. Success in entrepreneurship is also not because the individual came upon a time of good fortune, which encouraged the business to thrive. Success is not about luck; it is about choices. Every day the entrepreneur must make choices, and who the individual is as a person influence the choices that are made.

From the day that Chelsea Farmer decided that she wanted to make jewelry for the rest of her life to the present day, she made choices for HorseFeathers Gifts. Chelsea is persistent in her efforts, inquisitive, and comfortable with taking risks. Although not a comprehensive display of her personality, these three aspects drove particular behaviors in this business and in her life in general. Chelsea was persistent in her work when she chose to not let failure or rejection discourage her from her goals. An inquisitive mind fueled Chelsea to pursue an online jeweler's

education, lessons in web design, and skills in photo editing. Without taking risks HorseFeathers would have never left Etsy.com. Entrepreneurship involves risks and Chelsea was willing to take them. Key personality traits encouraged Chelsea to make certain decisions, which one after the other led to HorseFeathers ultimate success.

Tammy Asher Morse's role in the success of HorseFeathers is not to be overlooked or discounted. Although different from her daughter's role in the business, Tammy has personality traits that have fueled successes as well. Tammy is dedicated and thorough in her work. As discussed in the legal sections of the case, Chelsea intended to figure out their legal issues later rather than at the moment. The legal aspects of an entrepreneurship are crucial to the success of any business and one can see that Tammy's personality balances that of Chelsea to form an ideal business team.

Two aspects that both mother and daughter share are their strong work ethic and their passion for the work that they do. Their passion for making jewelry that encourages women to smile and express themselves fuels them to work hard in the business. This passion for HorseFeathers Gifts directs them both to make choices that will make the business stronger and more successful every single day.

In future research I would like to see similar research through case studies written on similar entrepreneurships around the United States and possibly even overseas. A longitudinal study would allow repeated observations of more entrepreneurs' personalities throughout many different industries. Through these studies one could discover not only what makes that particular business successful, but to also delve further into what makes that particular entrepreneur successful overall.

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## APPENDIX “A” – Initial Questions for IRB Approval

### Interview Questions:

These questions are very general, but I think they will allow me to get the information that I need while also encouraging other questions and conversations to come up. It is my hope that the information I gather from these questions will lead me to come up with other questions for use in subsequent interviews.

1. Who is/are the owner(s) of this business?
2. Who came up with the idea for this business?
3. What inspired the creation of this business?
4. Where was this business originally located? / Has this business always resided where it is now?
5. Why did you decide to open this business?
6. When (what year) did you officially start this business?
7. How did you finance your business initially? / How did you obtain the funds for the business' start-up?
8. Did your business morph over time or has your business always been the business that it is selling the products that it does? If the business has morphed, was this a positive or a negative change in your opinion?
9. Has the product that you offer changed over the years? Was this a positive or negative change? Did the product change because of a change with the market?
10. What have your sales revenue levels looked like over the last five years?



## Appendix “B” – IRB Determination



East Tennessee State University  
Office for the Protection of Human Research Subjects • Box 70565 • Johnson City, Tennessee 37614-1707  
Phone: (423) 439-6053 Fax: (423) 439-6060

June 10, 2013

Katherine Sellers



Dear Ms. Sellers,

Thank you for recently submitting information regarding your proposed project “The Pathway to Entrepreneurial Success: The Middle Material.”

I have reviewed the information, which includes a completed Form 129.

The determination is that this proposed activity as described meets neither the FDA nor the DHHS definition of research involving human subjects. Therefore, it does not fall under the purview of the ETSU IRB.

IRB review and approval by East Tennessee State University is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities are human subject research in which the organization is engaged, please submit a new request to the IRB for a determination.

Thank you for your commitment to excellence.

Sincerely,  
Chris Ayres  
Chair, ETSU IRB

## Appendix “C” – Interview Questions

### Interview Questions – HorseFeathers Gifts

August 13-14, 2013

How does a business grow from a simple idea to a successful business?

1. Where did your inspiration for HorseFeathers come from?
2. After you came up with the idea, did you immediately start working on the business or was there a span of time where you incubated the idea?
3. Did you seek any counsel about your idea?
4. If so, were you encouraged or discouraged about your idea?
5. In these early stages, did you perform any market research to determine the likelihood of success for HorseFeathers?
6. Did both of you receive college degrees?
7. If you attended college, did either of you study entrepreneurship? Or business at all?
8. Before HorseFeathers, did you have any prior experiences with running an entrepreneurship/small business?
9. Did either of you have early aspirations of owning your own business?
10. Do you have any family members that own their own businesses?
11. After you decided that this idea was definitely going to become a business, what was your very next step?
12. Was the birth of HorseFeathers sudden or gradual over time?
13. Where did you get the resources for the startup?

14. In the beginning stages, did the two of you do all of the work yourself? Use friends and family? Use professionals?
15. Did you find the legal aspects of starting a business (such as licensing) difficult?
16. Tell about some of the struggles with the startup process.
17. What was the most difficult part of the startup?
18. Were there any major issues with the start-up process?
19. Did you work out of your home first?
20. How many years was it before you moved to the place where you are now?
21. Why did you choose to start this business? Because of unemployment? Because you were unhappy with your current employment? Other reasons?
22. What were the circumstances under which you started HorseFeathers? Economically? Personally? Communally?
23. What year was this business fully up and running?
24. At this time would you say that the business was already thriving, simply surviving, or merely puttering along?
25. I assume that HorseFeathers is a partnership? Meaning that you are both owners of this business?
26. In your opinion what are a few pros and a few cons to having two owners instead of just one?
27. What has your revenue pattern looked like since you first opened HorseFeathers?
28. Has the HorseFeathers product line been the same since you first had the idea? What about since the business first opened?
29. If the product line has changed, then why did you change it? To fit with demand? Other reasons?

30. Have you had any product failures that had to be trashed entirely?
31. How long after the business started was the business available online? Was it a good decision to put the business online?
32. Who managed that online component of the business?
33. Do either of you have a background in digital media? Personally, do you think that this kind of background is useful when running a business in this day and age?
34. How did you manage to get all of this publicity for HorseFeathers? By chance? Or is this something you actively pursued?
35. Who managed the marketing component of the business? The logo etc.?
36. How did you get the HorseFeathers name out there so that you were well known?
37. What does the competition look like for your products and how are you combating it?
38. When was the moment when you stood back and said, “Oh, this is big”?
39. Many people fear failure when they seek to start a business. Did you think from the start that your business would make it?
40. Were there ever times when you felt like the business would go “belly-up”? And if so, what steps did you take to push past that?
41. Do you think that either of you have a particular component to your personality that allows you to thrive in entrepreneurship?
42. In your personal opinion, do you think that anyone can be an entrepreneur? Do you think entrepreneurs are born? Or made?
43. If you had to pick one personality trait that helped you the most in your entrepreneurship, what would it be?

44. In the future, where do you see this company going? What is the big picture that you have planned for HorseFeathers?

## Appendix “D” – Interview Transcription

Interviews by Katherine (Kady) Sellers with Tammy Asher Morse and Chelsea Farmer

KS – Kady Sellers

TAM – Tammy Asher Morse

CF – Chelsea Farmer

[Expletives Deleted] – expletives deleted

KS: Ok, question number one. Where did your inspiration for Horsefeathers come from?

TAM: We were kind of looking for something that did not tell you what it was.

CF: You know, everybody names their business after, like, their name. Their name gave ideas.

CF: Chelsea Farmer Jewelry, like that’s, that’s boring.

CF: You know what I mean. So we were looking for something where people would be like, well what the heck is that? Which they do, and you’re like, “I own Horsefeathers,” and then they’re like, “Well, what the heck is that?” I mean that’s what we wanted, basically.

TAM: It’s just something to not know what it was.

CF: It’s different, so you would have to investigate it. It would make you curious.

TAM: Horsefeathers is actually something on the back of the leg of the horse; it’s the little hair down there by the hoof. People say, “Oh, horsefeathers!”

KS: So you were both like, “Hey, why not!”?

TAM: It just came out of that and we kind of ran with it.

KS: Very cool. So, after you came up with the idea to start a business, did you immediately start working on the business, or was there a span of time when you knew you wanted to make jewelry and you wanted to do all that?

CF: I was already making jewelry, so then it was less of “Maybe we can turn this into something more than what it is,” and more like a random hobby at the time. So, pretty much, it was already happening, so we decided that we could come up with a name and actually make it, like, a legit business rather than just a hobby. Once we came up with a name and everything then it went pretty quick. We already had an Etsy shop. I was opening the Etsy shop, I was trying to figure out, well, what we were going to call it. Basically Etsy is why we had to come up with the name.

TAM: Yes.

CF: Because we needed a way to be able to, you know, kind of brand ourselves and things like that for on-line sales.

TAM: Uh huh, she started out with the Pony Beads when she was, like, 7 or 8 and then just kept going and going and got more expensive and always had a vision that she was going to own her own business and do her own thing.

KS: Well, you told me that at lunch. So, she was already making jewelry?

TAM: Uh huh.

KS: And then you started making more and then you went to Etsy?

TAM: Uh huh.

KS: And so then after you had Etsy you had to figure out whether you wanted it to really be something?

CF: Well, when I started with Etsy, then it had, like, occasional sales and what-not. This is, like, 2009. We had just heard about it on Good Morning America and so we didn't really know anything about it. And it's not what it is now, where they have workbooks and a handbook telling you step-by-step how to start a business -how to successfully run it. There are little tips and tricks that they have for selling on Etsy now. They did not have that back then, so it was kind

of like the Ebay aspect where you put your stuff up and you just hope somebody is searching for the same key word you decided to use in your description. It was kind of hit or miss. You just never knew. There were fewer people on Etsy too, so it wasn't as over-saturated with jewelry and stuff like it is now. We still do really good on Etsy, it's just that if you were starting out now, I wouldn't even know how to tell you to try to market yourself on there because it's been so over-saturated with stuff. Basically we just started doing the Etsy thing and then doing little craft shows and stuff like that and I think people were liking everything. This was when I was doing Lampwork glass Jewelry, so all the beads were handmade and they were all a little abstract-painting if you think about it. They were encased in glass, so, people always liked that. It was super original and different and nothing you're going to find anywhere really. I mean, we had a case of it here, but it's not something that you would find at any major store. You would not find anything like it at a Target or a Walmart or even a Forever 21. So, it was kind of a more original thing that people really liked and just the kind of thing that helps people build up their uniqueness. People wanted it because they knew it was one-of-a-kind and nobody else could have it. So that helped with the progression of doing shows and showing more on Etsy. That's what we sold the most of on Etsy- the Lampwork stuff.

TAM: She has a knack for putting it all together. It's just different.

CF: And it doesn't involve black. It involves color, people. [Laughs]

That's the thing. People will say you need to make whatever- they tell you to market and do your stuff for whatever your buyer wants, but we already have such a following at this point that I try and make people get outside of their comfort zone and try and show them different ways to put things together. Everything doesn't have to be all one color, you know what I mean? You don't have to color coordinate everything- if you like it, then it all goes together. So, at this point now, I'll just tell people. [Laughs] "We're not doing that. We won't make that for you, so pick a color." This is how we work. So, if you want some Horsefeathers jewelry, then you're going to have to work with us here. We like trying to help people be more original. We are trying to help them be different and be unique and express their own personality rather than...

TAM: Rather than follow a trend.



CF: My granny, her mom, [Points to TAM] is a perfect example of this, because when I ask her, she says, “Well, that’s what I’ve always been told.” “Why have you got yellow earrings with a yellow shirt?” And she says, “Well, that’s what you’re supposed to do, isn’t it?” And I’m like, “No.” [Laughs] If you want to wear some green earrings with your yellow shirt, put it on. So we just try and help people get out of this mentality that they have of how things have to be and, I guess, kind of be more expressive and unique and things like that. I have no idea where my style came from.

TAM: If many people come in here they wouldn’t purchase this stuff on their own.

CF: They don’t know how to put it together.

TAM: They think “If I have on orange, I have to wear everything orange.” And I’m like, “No, you don’t.”

CF: That’s what we try to explain to people. People like our silk wraps. They are our number one seller. I don’t wear a silk wrap, actually, and she does. [Pointing at TAM] People will always say that they are too young for them, and I’m like, “Actually, my mom’s the one who wears these.” Some people feel the same way about our head bands. They say, “This looks like something a young person would wear. I don’t wear those.” She does. [Points at TAM] People act like they are only for, like, 20 year olds, or for little kids, and I’m like, “No.”

TAM: We had our other store in Morganfield that bought, like, every color we had. She was probably 65, 70, or something like that, and she loved them.

CF: Yeah, the lady said people would stop her at Walmart and ask her where she got her headband. She was sending people in from Walmart! So we try to have a whole community that we fill. They’re not just customers. I don’t know how many times people have commented on our Facebook page. Somebody will post a picture of their bracelet or something and we’ll have all of our fans start calling me. People will be having full conversations, and people will ask me how much things are. People will ask how much a silk wrap is. We’ll have, like, 4 or 5 different people post links to them, and share a photo of theirs. It’s crazy. We’re not just such an informational thing at this point or just like your average store. It’s like people feel like they know us, which is how we tried to market it, so where you feel like you know who we are and

you're more like friends. People stop us. People, I smile at everybody know, because I don't know if you're staring at me because you know me, because you think you know me, because you saw me somewhere. So, I'm just hoping they aren't like, "Why aren't you talking to me?"

TAM: I went with my husband to a birthday party in Louisville and this woman kept staring at me and I was to the point where I was like, "Hey, what's going on?" And then, finally, she comes over and says, "You're part of Horsefeathers, right?" And I'm like, "Oh, [expletive deleted]!" I'm in Louisville, and nobody knows me here, and she's like, "Well, I watch you! I follow you on Facebook and stuff and your website." She's like, "I kept looking at you and I know that's gotta be her." It was just funny because we were at a 5-year-old's birthday party, and she came over and talked to me. She's been stopped in Lowes! [Pointing to CF]

CF: This lady scared the [expletive deleted] out of my husband! He was like, "I'm gonna walk off now, because this is awkward." This lady screamed to me- she was on her phone, too. I turned around, and she's like, "Hey, hang on!" And she puts her phone up against her chest so she could talk to me, and I'm like, "WOW. This is fun!" I went to high school in Nebraska and have been stopped at one of the bars there where we were at and people started talking to me about it, and then somebody was over here says, "Oh, yeah, I saw your Facebook!" Social media is definitely how we've grown so quickly. It's just from people sharing and things like that. We try and do a lot of giveaways and different things like that to interact with people. We try to do more than just sell to them on a regular basis.

TAM: She grew up in Omaha, Nebraska, so for this area around here, we're probably five years, maybe more, behind.

KS: Uh-huh.

TAM: Then they are in places like that. So Chelsea's faster paced. She sees what's going on in New York, California, and Texas and what's going on out there. What's the new thing. Instead of waiting for the new thing to come in 5 years from now, we're already pushing that, so we stay ahead of everything because she stays on top of what's going on.

KS: So, after you decided that you wanted to move past ETSY, did you seek counsel about starting your own business? Did you go to anyone and say, "Hey, will this work?"

CF: No, I'm not a really big fan of other people's input. That's just how it is. At least, that's my problem. That's just with fashion and things like that. I feel like everybody tells you how you do it and how you should do it. You can go to tons of different websites, and they almost look like they could be the same person selling the same thing. Say you went on Neimann Marcus. You wouldn't know which designer made what if it wasn't in the description, because all the photos are taken the same way. All the descriptions are very bland and the same- nothing stands out, nothing makes you look individual, and everything is just a cookie-cutter way to do things. I knew we didn't want to do it that way.

TAM: The information that we get on taking photos of our product is, "You should do it on black."

CF: Or, "Do it in a light box on a white backdrop and have nothing in the background." I want you to see our pictures and know who that belongs to and not necessarily-

TAM: -on a plain background or a chunk of wood or...

CF: Yeah, we have so much random [expletive deleted], like books, the billboard that we have that is going up has an old book on it that we just bought at the antique mall for \$3 last weekend. That's what I took our picture for our billboard on.

TAM: We take pictures like the ones we took of Paige, but some that are on the website are in front of an old broken down truck and then we just go to the farm and say, "Hey, let's stand in front of this and see how this turns out!"

CF: Basically, I just looked at other businesses- I do that a lot. I look at how other people do things and say, "Well, what could we do that will make it stand out from what they are doing?" Instead of going to somebody and saying, "Well, you helped these ten other businesses that are so bland, boring, and everything is the same. What can you do for me?" It's nothing, because you're just going to make me just like everybody else. The only way you are going to make it is to stand out, because if you don't have anything different to offer and you're not doing anything original, then what's going to make somebody choose you over somebody else? There's nothing different that makes you your own unique thing.

TAM: And we are very creative in figuring out how to use the bedsprings as props and stuff like that.

CF: Just like our name, we try to make people say, “What the heck?” and we want people to look at our stuff or look at our displays or our website. I don’t know how many times we have a contact on our webpage. People will go there just to say, “I love your website. Your website is amazing.” People send us comments. They post them on Facebook. They say, “You have the best website we’ve ever seen.” It’s fun.

TAM: Uh-huh.

TAM: I don’t know how you’ve (Chelsea) got it now, but we were talking about some of the things on our page. When something messes up, it says, “Well shucks, we’re sorry that that screwed up!” instead of-

CF: It says, “Whoops, our bad.”

TAM: It’s funnier.

CF: We just try and make it where even if something pissed you off on the website, at least it was funny when you got there, you know what I mean? Like, our policies page- we have a picture of us standing with shovels and pitchforks looking dead serious, and that tells you that we do not accept returns on sale items- this just tells you everything. Well, hopefully you’ll laugh when you saw this crazy picture...

TAM: Don’t mess with us or we will shovel you.

[Laughing]

CF: It’s a serious thing, but it’s our policy. We’re trying to convey that they are serious, but if we can put a fun twist on it, hopefully people won’t be accepting.

TAM: We were wearing dresses with our...

CF: ...with our shovels and pitchforks and stuff.

KS: I’ll have to look for that picture. I’ve never seen that picture.

TAM: Yeah –

CF: Go to our policies page.

KS: So you didn't seek council, so you weren't discouraged.

TAM: No – we did not.

CF: This is exactly, why we started our own website away from Etsy, because Etsy is the land of if-you-accidentally-click-on-the-wrong-thing-at-the-top-of-Etsy-they're-no-longer-in-your-store. They're back in the world of jewelry. So, if you click on one wrong thing, you're just a small, little window shop inside of Etsy. So, if they click on something they can be gone from your store altogether. Another thing is that people are copying us. So, we figured if we're not on Etsy where all of these little crazy wannabe's are, trying to steal all of our ideas all the time, if we don't have so much on there, then that's better. But then if we have our website, it also looks a little more professional and people will take you a little bit more seriously whereas on Etsy, people will apparently send you messages, and be like, "Would you take \$25 for this?" I'm like, "This ain't no [expletive deleted] flea market. No."

KS: My sister tried to sell hand-knitted hats on Etsy. They were for newborns and people would offer her like, \$8.00 or \$10.00. She said she was wanting to do a higher end thing. She didn't want to go to Walmart and get the yarn. She got good stuff, but then people didn't appreciate that. That's why you have to have your niche of people that will appreciate that.

CF: That's why I feel like a website really helps us. Plus, everything is ours. We can put out our personality more on a website, since everything is custom and things like that. Um, it helps you to get press too, you know? It's having your own website that looks good and represents who you are. I mean, obviously, we don't want to have a website that looks all bland and all black and white and super sleek looking and stuff like that. That's not us. I mean, [expletive deleted], if we went to an interview after you saw our website, then you'd be like, "Who are these crazy chicks, like all hippie as [expletive deleted] looking and stuff." It would just be weird. So we just try and keep it all so that you know what you're getting when you see all of our stuff.

KS: Anyway, so...

CF: No, we did not ask a [expletive deleted] person for their advice at all.

TAM: On discouragement, I will say that my family is very discouraging. I don't know about Chelsea's husband's family, though.

CF: His family just ain't creative.

TAM: Well, what I was going to say is, still to this day, it's almost like they think we can't do this. I mean, like I was telling you, if you get out of school, you go to the plastic factory or wherever you can get a job, and you make whatever you can make.

CF: ...Or, [expletive deleted], you're a nurse- because isn't everybody? (Laughs)

TAM: They say, "Go on with life as it comes at you. You can't just step out and sell jewelry."

CF: You pick something that everybody else does, and that's what you do. This isn't a real job to a lot of people. They're like, "Well, you don't really work." They act like we're just sitting here and I'm like, "I betcha' I work harder than you, let me tell ya." I work more hours by far.

TAM: And like I said, if it wasn't for her, we wouldn't be here, because I did come from that kind of family.

CF: She does get like that. Like this morning she was over-criticizing a bracelet and I'm like, "It's fine. It's all supposed to be one-of-a-kind." She was still half in her head and I just have this I don't care, like I just don't care what everybody's opinion is of how you are supposed to do things.

TAM: But sometimes I have to ground her down a little bit too, so the mix is good.

CF: We're not wearing black leather cuffs.

TAM: I don't want black leather cuffs.

TAM: hold her down and say "Hold on, just a second, girl, think about this." She gets mad at me because she'll ask me something (as you see how fast she talks) and then, like, as her breath ends, she's like, "Well, you're not saying anything." And I'm like, "Well, just a minute. My mind works in a way that I have to think it out, think it through."

CF: But then again, that's how we've gotten where we are so quickly because I'm like, "Go, go, go!"

TAM: We get several deals at one time on one weekend, because you say, "Oh, I forgot I put us in this one... and this one, too."

CF: Well, Sheila needs to be more on top of the calendar- telling me and reminding me.

TAM: I don't think you even tell anybody.

CF: Well, yeah...

KS: CRAZY.

CF: We never did any of the business program stuff. I just said, "Let's try and figure it out." I basically used only Google- and blogs, I read blogs. Because I learned Photoshop, I googled "How do you Photoshop." Well, now I don't even use Photoshop because then it told me about this free download- GIMP, and I'm like, "Free? [expletive deleted] yeah! I can do all kinds of crazy shenanigans your cousin used to do with Photoshop. I can do more than her in my free thing, GIMP, than she can do on her real thing and she's like, "How did you...?" and I'm like, "I don't know, I just figured it out." Once I got in there, I just started figuring it out, but a lot of it's been looking at a bunch of different blogs. I'd be working with a PR firm and then I'd read into that, and I'm like, "Well, we don't want to do that [expletive deleted] because it costs money." So with things like that I would read so many different blogs and basically take away my own like information from 10 different sources. So, it was basically just like I did a lot of on-line research I guess, but not necessarily like listening to one person or another. And it wasn't anybody coaching us, by any means, because it was me reading, finding information, and then determining what I wanted to do with it, for our business.

TAM: Oh, all these people say, "You're doing that, so we don't want to do that." Or, "Hey, they're doing this. We could do that, too!"

CF: Yeah...

TAM: So, it went both ways- what not to do and what to do.

CF: There are a couple of companies that we like that we kind of watch what they do. They're way bigger than us, so we kind of watch how they do things and think of how we want to build our business in the same way that they've done things. "Alex and Ani" is a jewelry company in Rhode Island, and they make all of their own stuff and it's all eco-friendly and their whole business is about positive energy and giving back and things like that. So, that's something that we're both really passionate about, so we just tried to figure out how we can put our own spin on how we want to portray those things, because it's kind of hard like determining how much of your personal life to put into your business, socially, for people to know about you and stuff like that.

TAM: And one of the things that we...

CF: [expletive deleted] some lady asked me what color my front door paint was and I'm like, "How do you even know where I live?" [Laughs]

TAM: Well, I told her, I said, "Would you please get her on Google and figure out how to change the address, because it gives my address as the store?" So I'm like, "People are gonna start showing up wanting to shop!"

CF: Some guy did. He ran into what's his name on the road.

TAM: Oh.

CF: Yeah...

TAM: She calls me one day and she's like, "Ok, I'm on here checking out how to become registered as a green company." So, we're sitting on the phone, talking back and forth answering questions, and it gets to, "How many chairpersons do you have? Who is your co-chair?" and "Who's your...?" And I'm like, "Ok, this is for a large company"

CF: It's talking about our "corporation."

TAM: There is all of two of us, you know!

CF: It asked so many questions. We were Googling them!



TAM: I had to call my brother and ask him a couple of questions, about energy usage at the farm.

CF: ...about the energy usage at the house and the farm, and we're like, "Holy [expletive deleted]"

TAM: We were like, "This is for a huge company. We're never going to get this!" And she's like, "Oh well, we'll just try it."

CF: We're Platinum members now.

TAM: We had a bigger store than most big companies!

CF: We have that out there on the sign- we're a certified Green Business Bureau, Platinum Member.

TAM: We wanted to be able to put that on the website, or to be able to say that and then to put things like the Better Business Bureau, so we went into everything we could think of that would make people want to come and do business with us.

CF: We wanted it to make us look more like a reputable brand instead of a "Mom and Pop" little crafty-craft show. We're not, and we've been trying to make people see that this is a serious business. Especially considering, like she said [pointing to TAM], half the family doesn't even acknowledge it, so they think we're just...

TAM: ...fiddling around

CF: Yeah, like our cousin's new girlfriend, who texts me, like, 15 times a day about things that she's asked me to make and I'm like, "I'm working on it! It's not like you're the [expletive deleted] number one priority right here, home fry!"

TAM: You're not the only customer we have! [Laughing]

CF: We've only got, like, 80 items for a wholesale order to do, but sure, let me whip you up something real quick like it's an emergency. I'm like, "What do you think I do all day?"

TAM: Nothing. You don't do anything...

CF: I want to put a window in so people can watch us in here and see what we actually do, because I feel like they think we're just back here on Pinterest... Which we are, most of the time, looking for display ideas, but...

TAM: We'll be doing something and all of a sudden, we're doodling on the computer, shopping, or doing something else, so...

KS: We talked a little bit about college at lunch, but do either of you have college degrees?

CF: No.

TAM: No.

KS: Neither of you do?

CF: Nope. We don't have a business degree. We don't have an anything. I took classes through the gemological institute.

KS: So you got certified and all that? Where are they?

CF: At home. They're out on the web.

KS: Did you study entrepreneurship at all? Or business at all? Or what were those classes?

CF: It was strictly on grading stones and everything jeweler related- nothing business related.

TAM: That's one thing that's got to be in our blood because I wanted to do photography whenever I got out of school. I was the old 35mm photographer. I really did do a lot of photography before digital came along. When I got out of school, I actually did some art also. I've always been crafty and I wanted to go to school, but you had to do the math and English and all that stuff, and I'm was like, "I don't need that [expletive deleted] to take a picture!" So I just never would go. I took some Kodak seminars and stuff and did my photography on the side. I probably could have done a business, but just never did get any kind of business degree. She was the same way [Pointing to CF]. She looked into different things and went back and forth, but she took the classes to do what she wanted to do, not something in business.

CF: I was days away from starting school in Evansville for engineering.

KS: Wow.

CF: Me and my husband were sitting there talking about it (that's where the whole, "We're doing a store" thing came from) and I was looking at classes and I was like, "Well, this is gonna suck." because I'm really bad at math, which you need to do well in engineering.

CF: I was like, "Okay, I can handle this." And they were like, "You are totally doing this!" And I'm like, "I could." I'm looking at the courses and the syllabus for the classes and everything like that, and I'm like, "No way." So, I had a slight melt down, and he was like, "Well, what do you want to do?" And I'm like, "I just want to make jewelry!" (Laughs)

TAM: Did I tell you about her when she was sixteen?

CF: No.

TAM: One day she called and she's like, "[expletive deleted], you're not gonna believe this! You know that jewelry store I go to all the time- the Bean Store?" and I'm like, Yeah." "They're gonna pay me to make bracelets!" [Laughs] She was beyond excited that they were going to give her a job and actually pay her to make these bracelets that she was making. So, that was the first of the jobs, so to speak, with the jewelry.

CF: Yeah.

TAM: It started at 16.

CF: Yeah.

TAM: Well, it started before that, but the pay started at 16.

CF: Yeah. I designed all the jewelry they had. They pulled beads and all the supplies, but then they had four display cases that were pre-made jewelry that you could come in and buy, and then we did custom stuff. You know the mother's bracelets with like the block letters and stuff? All I did was sit there and make the stuff for the pre-made things and help people design stuff and teach classes. I helped them put things together and things like that. So, that was kind of my job. It was pretty fun. Girl scouts not so much. We had Girl Scouts classes. I was fine telling them about gemstones and everything but, Girl scouts... So, we will not be offering Girl Scouts here.

KS: [Laughs]

CF: Girl Scouts will not be happening in this facility.

KS: So, before you had this business, you did have prior experiences with small businesses, then?

CF: I've never worked for a large company, ever. I mean, I wouldn't know what to do. You couldn't make me work somewhere where I couldn't talk to the person in charge. I mean, that's just ridiculous. Who does that? No.

KS: [Laughs]

CF: My husband worked at Target. I don't even want to think about working at Target. That just sounds horrible. I mean, they're friendly and my sister in law's a manager of a Target and she loves her job, but that's so not me. I like to know the people and things like that.

TAM: I've worked for several small companies. It seems like I always get stuck with a husband and wife and they just don't ever work out very well, but, I've worked for several of them. We moved around because of the military so I just kind of had to do whatever was in the area and got a lot of experience in different areas doing stuff like that.

CF: So, we kind of knew how small businesses operate and what we didn't want to do.

KS: So, you've had a lot of that kind of background?

TAM: Yeah...

KS: You've been exposed to a lot.

CF: Yeah...

TAM: Yeah, that helped...

CF: And obviously we're a little bit of "go-getters", so we were never that random person that was in charge of like faxing [expletive deleted] all day or something like that. She [Pointing to TAM] got me a job at the company that we all worked at, and I was doing one thing and then

ended up having like eighty other tasks. Now, every time I go there to pick up my husband's truck they still ask me when I'm coming back, because I was so efficient.

TAM: Yeah, what did it take? Like, two or three people to do your job?

CF: Yeah, they replaced me with three people.

TAM: And they replaced me with one and then that didn't work out so they tried two and they ended up with three doing my job and then nobody, because nobody would stay and do it. But I started out when the business was small.

CF: If they had paid me more, I probably would have stayed. Now they're going to pay three people to do what I was doing and they still aren't getting done as quickly as me.

TAM: If you start when it's small like that and then you just take on things as they come along. It's easier than just throwing them at people.

CF: I feel like every time I had a job in a small business I was always like, "I can do this! Why aren't we doing this?" I was always coming up with ideas for them and ways to be more efficient. I was always trying to help people out.

TAM: I think that helped us to know what not to do as much as what to do.

CF: Even though we never worked at a boutique or anything like what we're doing now. We always worked in offices.

TAM: I like dealing with customers. Chelsea, not so much. She's not a good customer person.

CF: No, I think I'm just too blunt. I'm like, "Stop wearing black!"

TAM: It's according to who our customer is. We have customers in here that we can do that with.

CF: That's another thing. People feel like they're good friends with us. The lady who asked me my door paint color wasn't thinking a thing about it, because she follows us on Facebook. She comes to the store all the time. She's probably like, "No biggie!"

KS: She thinks she's your friend.

TAM: Yeah. But we do talk to people. I've had several people at that place where we all three worked and I dealt with people all over the US because I was in management (a project manager), so I was calling and getting sandblasters in California and stuff in New York and wherever the guy was. I was talking to different people. But I'd get off the phone and they're like, "Who were you talking to?" And I'd say, "Somebody at so-and-so." And they'd say, "Well, you know him?" I'd say no, but the way I was talking to him they thought we knew each other. We were going back and forth and arguing and joking and so most people thought I knew these people when I get off the phone. I'm like, "I don't know them. I've never met them. I'm just talking to them like I talk to anybody."

CF: Oh, another thing. You know how people tell you to be all professional and serious in your emails? I exclamation point and smiley face the [expletive deleted] out of my emails on a regular basis. I always say, "Have a great weekend!" or whatever, and then put a smiley face.

TAM: And people talk to us and say, "Hey, can I get this in (such and such)?" and then she's really quick to email back or she'll send it to me and it's as if they're actually talking to you.

CF: Yeah, when I'm on my computer, they get an email back within seconds. It pops up on my Mac and I'm like "Reply." I'll be in the middle of stuff and answer emails and stuff constantly, which I think people like because they're talking to a person. (Laughs)

TAM: Yeah...

CF: People like to remove the middle person.

TAM: Exactly.

CF: I'm a personalized experience where they don't feel like they have to talk to five middle men to be able to get something accomplished. I don't like doing that, let me tell you.

CF: I just got counter-tops and it was the biggest pain-in-the-butt ever. Home Depot had four middle men in between you and the place that does counter-tops.

TAM: And we were actually standing in the place that does the countertops but he couldn't tell us anything, so we had to go back.

CF: We had to go back through all these other people before we got back to Home Depot. I'm like, "Home Depot, why are you in the middle? What do you even do? You sold it to me and this person has the countertops! Why do these people exist in the middle?" I don't understand that. It's the craziest thing ever.

TAM: What I was going to say is, we had a guy call one day because I had the phone before we had the store. I kept it because she's not a good customer service person.

CF: She's like, "I'm in the mall. Hang on."

TAM: This man calls and he says, "Can I talk to your purchasing agent?" I'm like, "Sure. Yeah, go ahead." And he's like, "Oh it's you?" I said, "Well, kind of." This was not that long ago. So he says he's with the findings place and he wants to get our business and he asks, "How many locations do you have?" And I'm like, "We just got our own line right now." And he asks, "Well, how many employees do you have?" And I said, "We just have two or three." I'm sitting here in my pajama pants talking to this dude and he thinks I'm some big corporate business with five locations. I called her [Pointing to CF] up and I'm like, "Yeah, I'm sitting here in my pajama pants talking to him." He just went on and on and finally he's like, "Okay, well, thanks for your help. I'll send you an email." And I'm thinking, "If you only knew, dude." So, we fake it a lot on our bigness.

CF: Yeah, people think we're huge. They think they are dealing with a Walmart Customer Service sending all these [pissy] emails. I'll be on it, and they're like, "I'm sorry for being rude!" I instantly reply and I'm like, "I'm so sorry, blah, blah, blah." and then they feel like my little email is just like talking to the owner and everything and then they're like, "[expletive deleted], there's a real person!" And something interesting, we just were featured on some TV show in New York and Kayla brought the phone- the work phone- it's a cell phone because we do travel and stuff, so we just keep it with us if we know something is happening, which most people would not do. So she brought it home. At 9:30 one night, she's dealing with the people whose credit card would not go through online or something. She's on the phone taking their order, and I'm invoicing them on the computer. This is 10:30 in New York! I'm like, "Who calls customer service this late at night on a small business like this? What do you think we're doing?"

CF: And they got us, because we do bring the phone home, because we want to be able to help everybody, so everybody can get in on a deal. We didn't want to have to catch up in the morning, so we just stayed up until 9:30.

TAM: Tory [Johnson] even said on her show, when we were first offering the deal on the silk wraps, that this is Horsefeathers Gifts, it's a mother-daughter team, it isn't a corporation.

CF: I mean, hopefully people aren't thinking anything crazy, but they do a lot of the time. They think that they're dealing with something huge. I guess it's just the way that we marketed ourselves and our business. Still, I don't know how many people call and they're like, "Who's in charge of your social media?" I'm like, "Me, it's my social media." I do my social media. I went to a conference and no other small business that I talked to does their social media. I think that's insane. How big of an ass would you feel if somebody walked in the store and they're like, "Oh, I talked to you on Facebook." and you're like, "No. You were talking to..."

TAM: I hate that when people call on the phone and somebody doesn't tell me that we're doing a coupon or something and I answer the phone and they're like, "Well, I was trying to use that coupon code you just put up..." and I'm like, "Uh, let me call you back in a minute." I call her [Pointing to CF] and I'm like, "What the [expletive deleted] are we doing now?"

CF: I'm like, "Facebook. Get with the times!" We don't discuss everything.

TAM: Yeah, we don't. Because she does [expletive deleted] on the spur of the moment!

CF: We're probably the craziest business you could have possibly chosen.

[Laughing]

CF: They're going to be like, "What the [expletive deleted]?"

TAM: Do you really want to write a paper on this?

CF: Yeah, though, we've been featured in all kinds of magazines, and all kinds of TV shows, and we have stores all over the world.

TAM: You could tell her where those are.



CF: We just got one and it was in some country that I feel is completely insane.

TAM: We have the United Kingdom. We have France.

CF: We have Africa and France. Remember, I couldn't figure out what was the road and what was the city? Somebody is asking me "Well, where in France?" and I'm like, "[expletive deleted] if I know. In the country of France. I don't know which one.

TAM: We don't care. It's just going to France.

CF: I figure I can't even pronounce the name of the store. So we have South Africa, ah, France, like three in Canada at this point. I know we have at least one, I think we have two in the UK, we just got this other one.

TAM: Ireland.

CF: I'm talking to a lady in Istanbul.

KS: Istanbul?

CF: Yeah. So, anyway their post offices aren't functioning right now, because there's some sort of little spat over there.

KS: Hm.

CF: Yeah.

TAM: You're going back this week, aren't you?

KS: No, I probably won't. I'll probably go back in the summer.

CF: Get us a store!

KS: My parents are moving to Estonia.

TAM: Yeah, you don't want to ask her. She doesn't even know which direction Evansville is right now.

CF: I cannot stand the accent of people in Russia. Listening to them speak irritates me. I'm sure they think that about me, but in movies and stuff, I'm like, "Why do you sound so [expletive deleted] off all the time?" I can't even handle it. It could be a [expletive deleted] place to go.

KS: Yeah, it's dark and cold and....

CF: No, nuh-uh. Don't sign me up.

TAM: Yeah, her Dad wanted us to go to Alaska once. That was our option and I said, "See ya when you get back, because first off, it's dark there and I'll weigh 300 pounds by the time we come back because I'm a sunshine person."

KS: So, you had early aspirations of owning your own business?

TAM: Oh no, I was told, "You just go get a job. You just work and trudge on."

KS: And so, she was set on the 9 to 5 life path?

TAM: That's right. At \$8.00 an hour. That was my goal. [Laughs] No, I actually did have a photography business on the side when we lived in Spain and did some stuff like that. Moving around is hard, because by the time you get established you're gone.

CF: Well, then she thought she was too old. And I'm like, "Well, you're not in a walker like you can't even get around."

KS: So, your parents or your family probably didn't have any small businesses?

TAM: Well, yes and no. I mean my dad was a farmer and my mom was a stay-at-home wife, so he had his own business! But it was just farming. My brother went straight into farming.

CF: Let me tell you about my dad's side of the family. You're a nurse or you don't do [expletive deleted]. That's what they do – nothing!

TAM: Her dad's family is the same as mine. They grew up 20 miles apart, so it's all the same. You get a job and you just move on. Her granddad was the Sheriff, and her dad was a deputy while we lived here. I guess I'm the one that pushed that. I'm like, "First off, I want her out of here, I don't want her going to Webster County Schools, because I don't feel like I learned

anything, I feel like you could get pushed through and never learn anything and that's the mentality. Like I said, at that point, college was not huge like it is now. But by the time she got out it was still not like it should have been around here, so there would have been no push for her to go to school. She wouldn't have gotten the opportunities that she got, so I pushed to get out of here and he joined the Navy at 27, I think. So we left. She was already born and was three years old or four when we left here, so his family's the same way. There just wasn't any push to do anything for yourself, or to better yourself. I guess you would say that was Omaha that she remembers. You know, we were in Spain and we were in Mississippi and we were in Rhode Island and Virginia. But she remembers Omaha the best. It's more advanced than here, and she got a better education than she could have ever gotten around here. That was my goal. It was to get her a better education, and for her to break that mold and get her out of that mentality that this is what you do. You just get out of school.

CF: Like my brother, it all worked out though...

TAM: Yeah, and he had the opportunity to go have a scholarship to the University of Kentucky, but he stayed right here and did nothing. He worked at a plastic factory forever and then got on at the police department, so they just don't push.

CF: If you told me we were moving to Australia tomorrow, I'd be like let's pack up and get the dogs some shots. Yeah, I'm all about it.

TAM: Yeah, she learned, and that's part of it.

CF: I really have a different mindset than anybody else in our family.

TAM: They are very reserved with everything.

CF: Just like I was telling you about Granny – they have a set way of how to do things and how things are supposed to be.

TAM: Nothing changes for them. Granny hates change, and we are all about some change.

CF: Uh huh.

KS: That's good.

CF: I can't commit to anything very far in advance.

TAM: No, she can't, because if she does then she wants to cancel.

CF: They tried to get me to sign up for a race next summer. I said, "I'm not planning a [expletive deleted] year in advance. No!"

KS: I'm like that. I'm a terrible planner. I only plan a week in advance because I don't really know what's going to happen.

CF: You don't know what's going to happen in that week.

KS: I might be in a really bad mood. I might be able to do something else on the Friday.

CF: Exactly.

KS: So, after you were on Etsy and you decided that you were looking into going into Engineering, and after you decided you didn't want to go into Engineering that you just wanted to make jewelry, what was your very next step after that?

CF: It was to make as much [expletive deleted] as possible and find local shows to do. It was to get out there as much as possible, because we had just moved and knew nothing of the area. We had only been here for a year. We had only been moved here from Omaha for about a year and we were living in Newberg, so I knew nothing of the area and I knew no one.

KS: Tell me about these shows. What type of shows were they and how did you find them?

CF: I used Google to find them.

TAM: Instead of looking for crap-type shows, though, we looked for like artsy-type shows. We didn't want to be in shows with Mom and Pop's knitted potholders and...

CF: ...and painted Santa Clauses. How many painted Santa Claus people can there be at one show?

TAM: A whole bunch.

CF: Anyways, we just tried to find shows to get into the game here because I knew what went in on Omaha, because I was already working at some of those shows randomly with some artists that I knew. I wasn't selling my stuff, but I was helping them with theirs. I didn't know where anything was around here, or what to do, so I just started researching and trying to find as much as possible about that. That's actually when, within a month, a friend of mom's told her about Studio 107 in Morganfield, which is where your cousin was. I went with them, and mom was still working at the time.

TAM: I was?

CF: Yes, you were still working and I was just supposed to take my jewelry in there and they were going to sell it for me. Then I ended up moving into the studio space and getting my own room and started to teach kids art classes. So, I sold my stuff out of there. There were three of us.

KS: That was about the time that I was 18, because I went in to get my pictures done for my senior year and you had just moved in. You had just started teaching the kids' art and at the time I think you only had bracelets in there. I probably looked at the bracelets.

CF: I was just starting to do stamping. I did photo pendants there like crazy. Your cousin did the photography, so we all worked off of each other by coming up with different things for each other. That was kind of fun because there were three of us that were all creative in one space. It just wasn't a very good retail location. You've seen it – you didn't know it was a store. You thought it was just a studio or a photography place, but you didn't know you could go and find the shop.

KS: It wasn't very visible.

CF: No, not at all. So anyways I went into there. How long was that? I left when she left.

TAM: It was 6 or 7 months.

CF: Yeah, somewhere in that range.

TAM: I don't remember. It was late summer when you went in and it was spring when you came out.

CF: We had already been talking about how to rearrange or do something with the store to make it bigger and then your cousin decided to leave due to a falling out with the other lady. She was looking to leave and go somewhere in the area and called me about another building that was more of a store front, which ended up being close, so then I was like, "Alright, well, I'm out too." So then we kind of ditched Studio 107 and walked across the back parking lot to our new building. We all parked in the same area. [Laughs] There were harsh feeling and "falling out drama" and the other lady that stayed was mad at me, but I was like, "This is nothing personal! I want to have my store and be bigger and do things!" She didn't comprehend that and thought it was a personal thing.

Anyways, we were in the back parking lot, so I would wave to her and she would walk in back into her studio. Then I called her and asked her about what she thought about opening up a store and of course she thought I was crazy, but I'm like, "It's only Morganfield!" People still think we live in Morganfield, or that we're from Morganfield and I'm like, "Just because we had a store there does not mean we live there or are from there. We're not from Morganfield, and we don't even know anybody in Morganfield." Morganfield was out of our way already and there's nothing there.

So we got into that store and because we had the space we started to try new things. Mom had started doing the silver and everything before this. She was already trying to perfect that. We starting doing silk wraps there, didn't we?

TAM: I think so.

CF: That's where we started doing our silk wraps. We were doing more and more shows, and people already knew about us. We probably had about 2000 Facebook fans at the time, I would say. In that first few months after leaving Studio107 and starting our own store we probably had about 200 Facebook fans. This was when Facebook was good and wasn't like it is now where they try and make you pay for everything.

We did a ton of business through Facebook. I would post a link to our website and stuff would start selling – it was just constant. So our website had started really picking up then. We had our own website, and had so much traffic coming there. Then people were contacting us about wholesale, so then our wholesale starting picking up more. We were getting to the point where

we either had to stop accepting people or we had to figure out some other way to do business. We'd have to grow or just stay where we were, because basically we were both still making everything and then what we weren't comfortable enough financially to have an employee. We were going to go do our own thing because we were still trying to grow so much, but it's almost like we tried to grow too quickly that then it kind of got chaotic.

TAM: With it being out of the way like that, any Doctors or anything that you had to do was here in Henderson. We lived in the Sebree area, but we were driving to Morganfield, so it was hard trying to keep a store going, buy the stuff we needed to make jewelry, keep supplies...

CF: ...and travel and do shows and work with our wholesale vendors. Shows are where we got most of our wholesale people from – and we were getting them constantly. That's a big income. These people place between \$500 to \$900 orders monthly for wholesale stuff, whereas, the other stuff is just kind of hit or miss. Our building was literally the most ridiculous situation in the world. I'm not sure if you know about this already.

KS: Uh, huh.

CF: It flooded regularly. The guy was a farmer who owned buildings and didn't give a [expletive deleted] about anything. The photography studio was flooding through the back and floated up her little wood floor and stuff back there. It would just pour in through the front – the floor tiles were coming up. We complained constantly and he would not do anything until finally we talked to the lady in the store in back.

TAM: It's Creative Touch.

KS: Creative Touch sounds familiar.

CF: It's still a little floral and gift shop in Morganfield.

TAM: We were at the other half of the building.

KS: So was that your third move?

CF: No, this was our second move. We were at Studio 107 and then we moved over to this store, which is when mom came into the store thing. We were probably there for 6 or 7 months, weren't we?

TAM: It was February to August, I think.

CF: Yeah.

TAM: That was not by choice, though.

CF: The lady at Creative Touch goes to the market and buys from all these wholesale vendors, so we went to go ask her how that works and get her input on wholesale. She said, "Sell me your stuff in your store right now, and focus on your wholesale. I'll take over your lease, and you can just walk away." She basically told us how to do wholesale and then took over everything so that we could just get out of it.

TAM: That happened in about 10 minutes.

CF: I went over there and started talking to her and it wasn't ten minutes later that she was like, "Well, did you guys make up your mind?"

TAM: I said, "Well, when are we talking?" This was the end of July and she was thinking about August.

CF: We had to be out of there in about two weeks, you. She was buying so much stuff at market that she had nowhere to put it...

TAM: ...and nowhere to store it.

CF: And people were coming into our store and offering to buy all of our stuff and most of our fixtures. We didn't leave with hardly anything.

TAM: I did the furniture painting and scuffing and all that and she bought a lot of stuff from me for her displays. She wanted everything that we had in there like dressers and the things that we were displaying stuff on and in. She wanted all that stuff, too. She also wanted our jewelry display case and all that kind of stuff.



KS: So, you don't do the furniture stuff anymore?

TAM: Well, I do a little bit at home. I just talked to them about renting the back half of that building because there is a garage back there. He's going to rent me that building if I want to do that. So, I don't know, because I don't know where we're going to display the stuff. That's part of the problem.

CF: I think you should mainly do custom.

TAM: I'm doing that, but...

CF: Mainly do custom. This is the problem. She did it before, so now everybody sees the stuff in here and wants her to do it again, which isn't what we were going to do. So then, we may offer it custom.

TAM: Yeah, I have three tables.

CF: We're trying to grow a jewelry business, not grow a home furnishing business. It would be a good source of income, but I just can't take over with the focus we already have. So anyways, we had a store in Morganfield, and we were trying to figure out how to do wholesale so we could get busier. We wanted a constant income, because you never know with retail, especially in Morganfield because that's a nothing town. There's nothing there. So we talked to the lady at Creative Touch, and then we decided that we were going to go for it and try and push wholesale. We were just going to move to my house, and then push our wholesale and focus on the online business if we could get out of the store thing, because there was no way for us to do it all and we weren't comfortable having anybody else in the mix at the time. So we moved to the house and it wasn't, [expletive deleted], a year later that I was like, "So, you wanna go for a drive downtown?"

TAM: It was a year.

CF: Was it a year?

TAM: Yeah, we left here in August and then we didn't do this until February of the next year. So, it was a little over a year.

CF: Yeah.

TAM: She was working out of her house, and I was working out of my house, and it was chaos trying to get everything to her and then making sure we had the right stuff.

CF: We had already been focusing so much more online anyways because that was our goal. When we when we left the store, we were going to focus online and just work on wholesale and everything like that. Then that built up so much that then we were like, “Well, here we are again. We need a bigger space. We need to be in a space together.”

TAM: So, one day it was snowing like no other and Chelsea was like, “Let’s go to Henderson and look for a building!” Chelsea’s husband was like, “Seriously, ya’ll are going to Henderson and it’s coming like a blizzard?” So we drove up and down the streets and then we got out and looked at this building and it had a turquoise ceiling and that’s all it took.

CF: I was like, “You need to call him! You need to negotiate something, because we need a turquoise ceiling!”

KS: So, that’s two places in Morganfield and then you were at your house?

CF: Yep. She was at her house. Then we came here. Then her thing was, “We already closed the other store, so people are going to wonder why we are opening this store.” And then she was like, “Well, what if it doesn’t work out?” It was a little bit more of a risk here because our online was doing well and then we decided to open this store and literally invested everything in it. We’ve never had a business loan. We’ve never had a loan from anything at all. We done this all on our own from whatever we’ve done. That’s why we weren’t comfortable hiring someone at the last place, because we didn’t know how it was going to work out and we were not getting a loan. We are just self-financing ourselves here, so we can’t afford to pay people when we don’t even know what’s going to be coming in. We’d rather just work our asses off even more than pay someone and not be able to pay something else. Anyways, when we moved here, we really just needed the studio space. We were looking for just a studio with maybe a little spot up front where people could stop in and pick up their custom orders. Well, [expletive deleted] that’s a full-time job up there. We had to have somebody up front. The store is super-busy.

TAM: I told her that the first day.

CF: It's probably busier than the website some days. It's insane.

TAM: Tell her about the first day when those coal mine people wanted to come and make bracelets.

CF: Yeah, so someone on Facebook found out that we were opening the store and asked in they could bring in a private party of all these people and we were like, "Oh my."

TAM: We were not even open.

CF: No, we didn't have anything done.

TAM: We didn't even have the cash register set up.

CF: We had been focused on up there because we were going to open the store, not back here. Well, then they wanted to do a private party, so we had to get the studio space ready, because that's where we do it. Well, it was just so insane.

TAM: We brought in folding tables and put them back there. We had 8 of them – four of them up here and four back there. We were definitely running out our ears that day, but it was good to just be our first day to open.

KS: So, you answered this question. The birth of HorseFeathers was definitely gradual.

TAM: Yes.

KS: And you got your resources from your own pockets, I'm assuming, because you said you didn't have a business loan.

CF: Nope.

KS: In the beginning stages you two did all the work yourselves.

CF: Well, [expletive deleted], we still do! We mainly just have people out front.

TAM: She'll string bracelets for Chelsea or polish things.

CF: Yeah, she works when she's out there. We give her jewelry to make and stuff like that, such as wholesale orders. She is selling wholesale orders while she's up there and stuff like that while we do everything else. There are just three of us.

TAM: Actually, we're going to talk about a fourth person. There could be 4 of us.

KS: Did you find the legal aspects of starting a business, like licensing, difficult?

TAM: It has been a pain in the rear. You [Chelsea] don't even know part of this.

CF: I know. It's messed up – everything is. This we probably should have learned in school. This is a course we should have taken.

TAM: Yeah, taxes, LLC's, and all of our wholesale numbers we started off doing, but we didn't do it right. We applied for a tax number and we got the tax number.

CF: None of this is really relevant.

TAM: It is, too.

CF: I'm just saying that she doesn't care about all the [expletive deleted] details of all of the chaos that has come from you trying to get a Tax ID number.

TAM: It is important if you don't know what you're doing. That's part of learning. If you don't know what you're doing, then you will get into the mess that we got into. We had the wrong tax number, then we got another tax number, and then we did an LLC. When you do an LLC, if you don't use the exact same information, then it comes up as two and you're filing taxes under two. So, we didn't know and we filed our taxes under one and it's not showing up. It's just been a mess. We're just now working with an accountant to try to get all of that straightened out. It was a mess.

CF: Hire an accountant. Put that in your paper. We highly recommend hiring an accountant. This is not a DIY!

KS: Those are the kinds of things that I think really hold people back when they are starting their own businesses.

CF: I was like, “Well, we’ll figure it out later.”

KS: It’s one thing if you sell things on your front porch. It’s one thing if your kid has a lemonade stand, but it’s a completely different thing once the government gets involved.

CF: We weren’t even anything until PayPal. It started our legal mess, because if you bring in more than \$10,000 on PayPal, then they send you whatever the [expletive deleted] it is. Then I was like, “Well, we’ve got to do something with this! PayPal sent this!”

TAM: Part of the problem there was that I have a friend that’s an accountant and when I asked her what to do with it she was like, “Well, we’ll just file it online.” Well, she filed it online. Because there are two numbers up there, she was filing against one of the numbers and it should have been filed against the other one. So then we got a thing saying they were going to come and collect, and we’re like, “We’ve been paying it!” So she was trying to get it moved over.

CF: I paid it. I was like, “Just get it done.”

TAM: So, now it’s paid twice and we have to wait until the new accountant gets the old one moved over. Then there will be extra money in there that will either go toward the future or we’ll get it back.

CF: So, with legal matters, I highly recommend hiring a professional.

KS: Yes.

CF: For everything else use Google – it’s a DIY.

KS: When you first started do you think it would have been better for you to get legal advice?

CF: Oh [expletive deleted], yes.

TAM: I really don’t know who you would go to directly.

CF: Here’s the problem, too. We’re in the area that we’re in. If you look at Lexington or Frankfurt, they have programs where you can go in the city and they’ll like teach you about taxes and this and that. They have small business programs. Here they don’t have [expletive deleted]. There’s nothing here. Even Nashville has them. All these other cities offer all these tools to help

you because they want their areas to grow. They want to help people start their businesses, which doesn't happen here. We are going to a seminar on the 20<sup>th</sup> where they said you can put your business card in a hat and this guy, if you get picked out of the hat, he'll come and give you advice on your place. I'm like, "I'm not putting my business card in. I don't want anybody's [expletive deleted] opinion." I'm telling you right now that he can talk all he wants, and I will listen and take away what I want to take away, but I do not want somebody coming in and giving me their input on my stuff.

KS: I know they have a lot of them offered online, because just from the research for my thesis, I've found a bunch of online packages where you basically sign up and they say, "Ok, step #1 is: You need to go to such and such for the license or whatever." I do know they have those.

CF: We'll definitely research that.

TAM: In any kind of business situation having an accountant and I think having a lawyer would be very important.

CF: I would have never thought we would need a lawyer, but let me tell you...

TAM: ...people are crazy.

CF: Everybody and their mom wanted to send us a [expletive deleted] email on something, or were saying they were going to sue us, or that we didn't do something, or that we did something wrong, or that we [expletive deleted] put our logo somewhere. It's stupid stuff on a regular basis. I'm like, "I'm about to Google a little fake lawyer document and start sending my own out!"

Kady Sellers Interview, Part 2

KS: Kady Sellers

TAM: Tammy Asher Morse

CF: Chelsea Farmer

KS: So, we talked about the legal aspects that were difficult and struggles with the start-up. Would you consider that a struggle with the start-up, or did you have other struggles with the start-up? So, what kind of things did you run into and...

TAM: Well, I guess because we did it while we were working and doing other things, I don't really see too many struggles with that.

CF: I'd say: resources. The small business stuff around here and things like that was the only issue. The issue was with trying to find out how to find information like that for just local things. We looked at grants and things like that, but unless you're missing a limb or something crazy, they don't even care.

That's why we just ended up doing everything ourselves, because we tried to find some sort of business grant or loan. Well, not a loan – we knew we didn't want a loan – but something like that that was even remotely helpful or even other resources like what we were talking about that happens in Frankfurt or Lexington. The different towns that people have told us that offer small business things were basically just a crash course in doing things locally, so that would kind of get your name out in your area and stuff. That was basically the only problem that we had. We couldn't really find things like that.

TAM: A start-up struggle was getting in here [referring to their current location] and getting started. Just like I said about when we opened the doors we had that first really good day. I think we ordered a few things extra and we had a few things in here, but we really weren't planning on that being as big as it is out there. It was going to be a few things out there and then a place to pick up your order, and we were going to be back here. It didn't turn out that way, so what we were making we were just putting back into the store and bringing more stuff in and trying to find more things that fit in this area.

CF: Word-of-mouth is really good for us. Like I said, we try and make people feel like they know us and that we're friends. So, definitely word-of-mouth is the best advertising that we've ever had – same thing on Facebook. And it helped that we kind of promoted it on Facebook before we opened the store, so that kind of built up the anticipation.

KS: You could probably say that all of your moves, such as your times in Morganfield, were probably difficult, too. Because you were in the one building, and...

CF: And stupid stuff that is not even business related. You know what I mean?

KS: But that's a start-up struggle for sure. Because you were in a place where you were not being displayed as much...

CF: Yes.

KS: ...you needed to be. You weren't in a good selling position. Then you moved and that wasn't...

CF: Then the building sucked. It flooded on a regular basis.

TAM: Our business and all went well, but I mean the struggles as far as...

CF: Yeah, we've never had a problem with not having any customers or anything like that. It's always been the most bizarre thing. Really why does the building flood?

TAM: It's the wall. The concrete wall when we moved in there had to be repaired. I had to spend two days putting the mortar back in all the bricks and then painting the whole thing. Then of course everywhere we go we paint, so it's our own choice is to do things like that as far as the struggle.

CF: Yeah...visibility and stuff.

KS: So, finding a good location, for sure?

CF: That's definitely been a struggle. And we didn't realize how busy we were going to be here.

KS: One of my questions was: What was the most difficult part of start-up? Would you say it was location? Would you say it was...?

CF: It was decision making, because we didn't know whether to go off on our own and try and do this. What happens if you sign a year lease? What happens if...?



TAM: With rent every month and the utilities. Here we have utilities in with the rent, but the other place we didn't, so you never know.

CF: But you never know what's going to happen. And since you're already doing well do you really branch out and say, "Ok, let's go do this!"? We don't really play it safe, because we're not good at that, but that would be your option to say, "Well, we're doing fine working from home and selling online. Do we really need to do anything else?" But then again if you don't take chances, then you're not going to grow.

She [motioning to Tammy] was definitely the one that was a little iffier about the whole store thing again, because we had such a nightmare with the building and everything with the last store. And we always want old buildings, so that was definitely an issue. Mom was more like, "Well, what if it doesn't work?" and I'm like, "Well, what if it does, though!" [Laughs] Then we'll make all kinds of money and we'll sell to all kinds of people and we'll become the shop that everybody wants to come visit!

I was standing up there earlier and this lady is like, "I thought I saw something the other day, but now I just found out I'm going to a birthday party, so I came in for a present. People come in! I was walking back here and saw a lady who just bought a purse the other day walk in with her new purse to come shop. We have had constant customer. Within the first 48 hours we were open some lady had come in three times - THREE times! I was like, "This lady loves us! She is for real into some HorseFeathers!"

TAM: At that point we were using a little thing on the computer and I start to get her phone number because we text out the receipt. She started telling me and the computer finished it off. She was like, "My number's already saved in the computer."

CF: It was. We had literally been open for two days and she was already in our system!

KS: It takes chances.

CF: Yeah, I'm the chance taker. Just like this thing that we did with Tory Johnson of "Good Morning America." Tory does "Deals and Steals," and she does a local segment. We met her at "Spark and Hustle," which is a business conference that is super-fun. Tory Johnson, FYI, is not a college graduate either. She did not go to college. She goes all around the country...

KS: She dropped out and got a job?

CF: No, she goes all around the country and teaches people about small businesses and different things. Basically you just brainstorm and meet other people and bounce ideas off of each other and talk about different marketing things – social media stuff and everything. So anyways, we had met her and (this is crazy!) I walked up to her and I'm like, "What do we need to do to get on your show?" And she's like, "You just need to send me an email." We sent her an email and we finally got everything scheduled. We sent them samples of our stuff and cards telling them about it (trying to talk up our product). And then I was like; "I understand that people need to see it in person, because when you say handmade a lot of people think that it's craft." They think we've just hot glued some [expletive deleted] together. They have no idea what we do. That's the problem with saying something is handmade because it's a fine line between what we do and people thinking it's a craft and that you're buying your stuff at Walmart or Hobby Lobby.

KS: Hot gluing cotton balls together? [Laughs]

CF: Anyway, we sent some samples, and I got an email. It was from Elaina, her assistant, and she said, "So, are you available to go on this next Thursday?" This was on a Friday, so it was less than a week that she wanted us to go on. They had already told us to expect anywhere between a hundred to five hundred orders, because you never know what you're going to get! It's in the New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut area. So, I was like, "Well Elaina just emailed me. Do you want to go do this?" And then she's [motioning to Tammy] just kind of iffy over there. And I was like, "Well, I'm going out of town!"

TAM: Well, you should see what I do back there! One by one I make things.

CF: Yeah, well she was [expletive deleted] out and I'm like, "You do not say no to these people if they want you on their show. This is basically our tester to get us on "Good Morning America." So, I'm like, "If they ask you to do it, you [expletive deleted] do it, and you make it work!" I'm like "We just need to move the Keurig up here. We'll make some coffee. We'll sleep on the floor. We'll get it done! We can make it happen!"

KS: So, you take risks. See, I've never failed at anything in my life, because I'm not a risk taker. Have you ever done something where you took a big risk and you failed miserably? Or have you always taken risks and they've turned out well? Because I think that's what entrepreneurs fear.

CF: I feel like everything always works out – maybe not necessarily the way we planned it, though. We went to the Oscars – that was cool, but that didn't really do [expletive deleted] for us besides the fact that we've gotten some stuff on some TV shows and things like that. Realistically, though, money and business income wise that didn't do anything. However, because we were going out there, the day after the Oscars Fox News wanted to interview us live on their morning segment with their Oscars recap. That made our website crash because we got so much business from being on there, talking to them, doing our interview, being ourselves, and telling them about our business. It was on national TV!

Yeah, they said, "You have to watch this! It's on our Facebook page!" They're like, "What's it like working with your daughter?" and she's like, "Well, sometimes I want to kill her!" [Laughs] I'm like, "It's [expletive deleted] Fox News! No big deal. They're talking about Obama and..."

KS: You know if something happens to her they're coming looking for you... [Laughs]

CF: Things just like that. We took a really big risk. We spent a lot of money to fly to LA and everything. We flew Aubrey, too, so we paid for her, her hotel, and everything. We paid for everything for all of us to go hoping that it was going to pay off in some way. Well, now that I look back, that show was totally not worth it because if we had not been on Fox News, then we would have wasted a whole lot of money. So, that didn't get us anything, but the Fox News thing completely made up for it.

TAM: I don't agree with you on that, because the fact that you were at the Oscars has brought us a lot of attention, which in return has brought...

CF: I feel like we need to get another show or do something, because we can only use that for so long. We're not going to be Sarah saying...

TAM: But my point is, there were people...

CF: We need another show.

TAM: ...at the Oscars. We have pictures right there...

CF: Yeah.

TAM: ...of all the people that have or are wearing our jewelry. We've seen one of the guys up here that is wearing his Karma necklace in a show last year.

CF: Yeah, he shopped online. Pretty much every red carpet he's been on he's been wearing our necklace.

KS: Don't know if I recognize him...

CF: You may or may not. The dude in the middle is naked on "Sex and the City." He's a hot naked guy. That's all anybody knows. That's literally what his character is if you go to his resume. It says, "Hot naked guy." What is that show I watch?

TAM: I don't know what you watch.

CF: He's on this ABC Family show I watch all the time. It's got some deaf kids. I cannot think of what it is. I never can. Anyway, we met the guy from "Twilight." We met the guy from "The Blind Side" – the one that played the main guy. We met some different comedians. Some people you would recognize. The one guy is The Silver Surfer from some Avenger's movie, so he's in full costume. One of the guys is on "True Blood." This girl Jennifer [motioning to picture] we talk to all the time – Jennifer Carta. Her husband is the one that's on True Blood. Jennifer is on the show "Victorious" and plays the mom. She looks nothing like she does in person. That's what's so bizarre. We have our pictures with them, but then when you see another picture of them or you see them on TV, then I'm like, "That doesn't even look like her!" They were themselves dressed as themselves and showing their own personality there! When you think about their character on TV that's totally, totally different!

KS: Ok, so there weren't any major issues. So, you didn't work out of your home first, or you did? I guess technically...

CF and TAM: We did. Yeah we did.

KS: You worked out of your home first?

CF: Yeah.

KS: And how many years was it before you moved to that first place?

CF: It wasn't years. It was months.

KS: Studio 107?

CF: It was months, wasn't it? I had always made jewelry from home, so I don't really know how you...

KS: Well, gauge it from the time when you were first on ETSY. We'll pretend like that was the start of things.

CF: I was thinking like 6 to 8 months. It was probably 6 to 8 months. I had already decided I was doing this full time when she was still employed somewhere else. So, I was already like, "Well, let's do this Studio 107 thing because, why not?"

TAM: Yeah, we said, "Why not try that."

CF: That was our outlook on it, yeah.

KS: So, how many years was there in between Etsy and here?

TAM: Oh, Etsy.

CF: Etsy was 2009.

KS: Ok, and you've been here how long?

TAM: We just started in April.

KS: In April.

TAM: Uh huh.

CF: So, we've been on-line constantly since 2009.

KS: So, it's been quite a process to get here.

CF: Uh huh.

TAM: Um hum.

KS: So, you have been working from 2009 to 2013. Why did you choose to start this business besides the fact that you just wanted to make jewelry? You did say that you liked your job.

CF: Yes.

KS: So, you liked your job.

CF: I sure as [expletive deleted] did not want to work at a 9 to 5 for the rest of my life. I can tell you that right now.

KS: I guess I asked that question because some people start their businesses because they are unemployed, and some people start their businesses because they hate what they do...

CF: I did not want to have a 9 to 5. I liked my job, but I didn't want to be someone who was there for life, though. I asked myself, "Do I want to do that every day for the rest of my life?" And that was not what I ever planned on.

TAM: We both had the same issue. We were working for a husband and wife that owned the company, and we just had a hard time dealing with her. So, she [motioning to Chelsea] quit because she got sick of dealing with her and then...

CF: I quit because I was going to school.

TAM: I was laid off in June. So, then after I was laid off and I was on unemployment. Soon we were both like, "Why don't we try to make this work?" That was in 2010.

KS: 2010?

CF: Um hum.

KS: So economically what were the circumstances under which you started HorseFeathers? Did you feel like you started during a good buying time for consumers?

CF: No.

TAM: No, that was another thing our family was thinking. They were thinking, “What are you doing?”

CF: The first stuff I was making...

KS: Those are relatively expensive compared to going down to Walmart.

CF: Ok, they were even more expensive. When I started I was doing my Lampwork jewelry. Lampwork jewelry goes anywhere from 70 to 150 dollars a bracelet. That’s what I was selling and as soon as I raised my prices, one person told me I needed to raise my prices on Etsy. I started selling stuff like crazy. That’s all it took. I thought my stuff was fine. I knew how it was priced. I knew I was covered and was making money. Then when I marked it up even more, it was kind of like people appreciated the value. They saw that it was better quality just because of the price. They thought that was a direct reflection. When I marked it up it started selling even better, so I actually started at a higher price point.

KS: So, you’re in a niche market, I guess, because you’re selling to customers who put a high value on handmade, high quality stuff.

CF: I’m going to tell you right now, I’m pretty sure that half the people that buy our [expletive deleted] buy it because they like us.

KS: Um hum.

CF: We have both said that the whole time. They could not like a single thing here but they love us and they want something that we made. And it happens regularly. I cannot believe people sometimes. I’m like, “They are not going to wear this!” It’s just crazy that it’s literally because they like us. We have people who want to take pictures with us whenever they see us at shows. It’s not like we’re crazy celebrities or something. People like us. My husband always says that we’re selling ourselves. He says that’s all it is. He says we’ve marketed ourselves so good that that’s what people want. It’s an experience. It’s more than just selling an item.

KS: I think people want that, though.

CF: Yeah.

KS: I think people want more than just an item.

CF: Yeah.

KS: I think if they want just an item, they'll go to any old store down the street.

TAM: Exactly.

KS: Nobody knows anything about the jewelry.

TAM: Someone just sells it to you and that's it.

KS: I want the silk wrap with "Carpe Diem" on it for a reason, and it's not just because of the saying. I write the saying on my arm all the time when stuff is bad. It's a whole story.

CF: And I think people knowing so much about our story and everything helps. I'm posting pictures of us sitting by a fire and drinking wine and at the beginning I was thinking, "Well, what if people don't drink?" And I'm like, "If you don't like it then you don't have to be here" I'm not going to not show my personality through what we do just to not offend somebody. You're going to [expletive deleted] off somebody no matter what you do. It doesn't matter. So, we're just going to do what we do and be ourselves. We do not get political or religious or anything, because I don't impress that on people. I don't feel like you should at all, because that's your own personal opinion.

TAM: And we're not posting pictures of everybody drinking cans of bud,

CF: It's not like we're doing body shots either. It's just a bonfire and a glass of wine. It's not something crazy.

TAM: It's just stuff that we do. That's just it. We're not trying to capture the world. We're trying to capture whoever like's our type of stuff.

CF: I think that's a lot of people's problem, because at that point you don't even need to make your stuff because people don't care. You're not a brand. They're not buying it because of you. At that point they're just buying it because of your product, so it really does not matter if you make it or if a five-year-old in Tahiti makes it or wherever. It doesn't matter at that point.



TAM: We've had people that tell us we should be on Shark Tank and we don't want any part of that because we don't want to be...

CF: No, I'll be [expletive deleted] if somebody's going to tell me what to do all the time because they own 40% of whatever. No.

TAM: Or to have it shipped over to Taiwan...

CF: I mean that's the first thing. If you do Shark Tank, you don't make anything. You're not making your stuff anymore. That's the first thing they will tell you is to outsource – and outsource it overseas.

TAM: Yeah, everybody says that's where the money is, though, but I think we're just fine – not that we're both getting rich right now. [Laughs]

CF: Not that you shouldn't try to aspire for a bigger paycheck or something, but we did not start this, nor is the goal of anything we do to see how much money we can make.

TAM: Or how big we can get.

CF: Or how many hundreds of employees we can have. I don't even want to think about that. No. I don't want people all up in my stuff. I want minimal employees.

TAM: She's [motioning to Chelsea] very do-it-herself. I have trouble sometimes with making her not...

CF: Here's my thing. Nobody is going to care as much about what I'm making as I'm going to care about it, because it's not their business. This is a job to them. It's nothing more and that's the problem with things – that's all it's going to be. So, if they jacked up something and just shipped it out to a person, they don't care. You know what I mean? Whereas if I mess something up, then I'm like, "Well, [expletive deleted]! I better redo that." No, people don't care.

TAM: Your quality exceeds or surpasses.

CF: Yeah, and I feel like people don't comprehend that and it's not going to be anything more to them. So, until we find somebody that I feel absolutely wants to make something perfect because

they appreciate it... I just don't think I'm comfortable growing huge with how people are. Have you heard of Origami Owl?

KS: Yes.

CF: Ok, they weren't big a year ago. And I know the little girl that started it and our web developer used to be her same web developer. I don't use that web developer anymore because she sucks, but, anyways, their whole goal was to do home parties. I was talking to her about it and she said that's when you have to make a decision. If you go big and you lose all your quality because not a single thing is made in this country and not a single thing costs more than 75 cents but they sell for say... \$30 or \$40. I would not feel comfortable living like that or selling things like that.

I mean we have people all the time... A lady that just bought a silk wrap bracelet, her husband just lost his job or something, but we had a deal on them and she wanted the saying on it because she thought it would help her to be positive. So, we sent her a free coozie. But there's no way that I could possibly have somebody tell me their story or whatever and then send them a necklace that I'm saying is 30 dollars that I know I [expletive deleted] paid 75 cents for. No, I think that takes a different type of person. They have a completely different mindset with their business than what I would feel comfortable doing. I'm not trying to [expletive deleted] half the population with some made-in-China-cheapo-stuff and act like it's something that it's not.

KS: It is two perspectives. I had two different theses. The first one was more about sustaining local economies with local entrepreneurship – that's more like what you all do. You want to keep things small, keep them local, keep them high quality, and keep yourself in it.

CF: Yeah.

KS: Then others sell all the rights to sell everything and everything goes to China or to wherever. That's really important – especially to me.

CF: We had talked about actually working with the local women's shelter this Christmas and having things that they could make to help us get through Christmas production so they would have something to do and give them some extra money. We were just trying to figure out how to do things locally that would actually benefit other people.

KS: How to help the people here.

CF: Yeah. We don't need some little rich 15-year-old up there working for no reason. We're trying to actually help people who need and would appreciate what we're doing and things like that.

KS: Um hum.

CF: I mean not that a little rich 15-year-old wouldn't, but I'm just saying that's not my goal. I don't need some snotty little [expletive deleted] up there making people feel like [expletive deleted] because they can't buy something.

KS: That's really good.

CF: We're crazy, but we're good people.

KS: In entrepreneurship you have to have a passion for it, otherwise you won't stick with it. I mean if you're in it for the money, you might as well just leave.

CF: Yeah.

KS: If you're just out there to make a million dollars, you might as well just stop right there. That's not the way it works.

TAM: Then do your investments or do your finance or what we were talking about.

KS: So what year would you consider HorseFeathers to be fully up and running?

CF: At least 2010. Because it started in 2009, but by 2010 it was pretty steady. I was definitely shipping things out weekly via Etsy and stuff like that. And I was doing shows. I would definitely say 2010.

KS: So you started selling on ETSY in 2009, correct?

CF: It was the end of 2009, wasn't it?

TAM: I don't remember.

CF: I would say it was.

TAM: It doesn't have to be definite.

[Laughing]

CF: I would say it was 2009.

TAM: It was 2009 or somewhere around there.

KS: So at this time when it was up and running would you say the business was thriving, simply surviving, or merely puttering along?

TAM: In 2010?

KS: In 2010.

CF: Surviving.

TAM: It was surviving.

KS: Okay, that's good. Do you consider HorseFeathers a partnership? Are you both equal owners or is one of you the owner and one of you not?

CF: No.

TAM: It's about to be.

CF: Is that what you're changing?

TAM: I'm not changing anything. He had to change it because that's the way the LLC was.

CF: Oh. Originally, my name was on everything.

KS: Okay.

TAM: Um hum. That's part of what he just called me about yesterday about because it has to change. It all has to be exactly the same. It can't be you on one thing or even HorseFeathers on one thing and HorseFeathers Gifts LLC on something else.

CF: What are we? Are we HorseFeathers Gifts now?

TAM: HorseFeathers Gifts, LLC.

CF: Okay, good. Because when people ask me, I don't even know if she put "gifts" on that LLC when she did it. I have no idea.

KS: So, originally you were the owner [motioning to Chelsea]?

TAM: Uh huh.

KS: Okay. But now you're both going to be owners. So, in your opinion, what are pros and cons about having two owners instead of just one? Do you find it hard to coordinate goals? You're the risk taker [motioning to Chelsea], and you're not as much [motioning to Tammy].

CF: I think it would be harder if we were not related. Because if you are working with just a business partner...

KS: You seem to have worked together your whole lives – your whole life at least [motioning to Chelsea].

CF: Yeah.

TAM: I just put up with her. Literally that's the way it is.

CF: She goes along with it.

TAM: Yeah. Sometimes I do and sometimes I don't. When she knows I don't like it – sometimes we do it and sometimes we don't. But we have our own way because it was me and her the whole time she was growing up, so it goes all the way back to being you know 15 or 16 and her wanting to pierce her nose or something. I'm like, "Ok, I don't like it, and I think you're going to not like it at some point, but you know, you're driving and you're going so I guess if that's what you want to do, you can do it." And it never was done. My approach was never like, "No, you are not going to do that." I just speak my piece and she goes with whatever.

CF: I jump on it. So, if she calls and she's like, "Eh" then I'm like, "Maybe I'll think about it for a little bit." And then she'll be like, "Where are we?" and I'm like, "[Expletive deleted], no."

TAM: I just get her to think about it for a minute.

KS: So, there is communication happening?

TAM: There is, yes, and sometimes I just have to tell her.

CF: Sometimes she's [motioning to Tammy] half awake. She wakes up to text that says, "Call me" and then I'm like, "No."

TAM: Yeah, there's a "ding, ding, ding, ding" when my phone turns on.

CF: I'm like, "Seriously, are you still sleeping? What the [expletive deleted] are you doing? I've been up for 2 hours working."

TAM: Yeah, she's been up trying to get us into things for two hours. I have to process and get her to slow down. She's the driving force behind the whole thing, and always has been. I do a lot of the behind the scenes stuff. I do a lot of the building and fixing and changing things – like the stupid store down there in Morganfield.

CF: She's the maintenance man.

TAM: She'll call me saying, "Well, it blew a fuse." I'm like, "You change it. I'm not changing that." I was in Madisonville, and I'd drive from Madisonville to Morganfield to change a fuse – silly stuff like that. It should have been the dude that owns the building, but it's usually me.

CF: He's like, "Well, that doesn't really count as an emergency." And I'm like, "You're right – no electricity and no credit card machine is totally not an emergency in a retail store. Fine, no big deal, we'll just chalk on the wall!"

TAM: I drag furniture in and out and paint things and fix things and put things together and...

CF: I do all of our website, marketing, social media, and advertising – anything like that. I make all of our ads. I take all of our pictures for our website except for the photographer we work with. We do model ones, too.

TAM: So, it's good, because we have our own way of getting along.

CF: I definitely think it would be different if you just went into business with some random person, because you would be asking their input on things. I would have never gone into

business with somebody else – I'll tell you right now. It wouldn't have happened. I don't want their opinion.

TAM: Most of the time she doesn't want mine, but she gets it anyway.

CF: Sometimes I say stuff out loud just to see what she says. Then I'm like, "I already was going to do that." [Laughing] I'm like, "That's what I was thinking. I just wanted to make sure." I was just second-guessing myself to see if it was good enough or not.

KS: So, what does your revenue pattern look like since you first opened HorseFeathers? Has it been up and down, like a bell curve, or...

CF: No, every season it fluctuates, but it's always going up. We're always selling more. It's always growing. The store is definitely reaching the goal that I had set for it, right?

TAM: It was to pay the rent, wasn't it? Pretty much.

CF: No, my ideal goal was to reach \$1000 a day on-line and in store, because that would be \$375,000 a year. That was my goal for everything, which has been good recently.

TAM: \$375,000?

CF: If we had \$1000 a day, that would be \$375,000 a year.

TAM: Would that not be \$364,000?

CF: Is it \$364,000? Grant told me it would be \$375,000. Maybe he just knocked something out.

[Laughing]

CF: I tried to calculate something earlier and it was something about times per week and I was like, "I have no idea how many weeks there are in a year, so lets just do days.

TAM: Apparently, you screwed that up too, then.

CF: I did.

TAM: This happens a lot of times.

CF: I don't know what he calculated, but it was \$375,000 a year. Anyway, the [expletive deleted] goal is \$375,000 a year.

TAM: Somehow we're going to do that. There's a little extra somewhere.

CF: We get slower in the summer months because everybody's on vacation, but then Christmas hits and business triples.

TAM: Chelsea always wants to do a show. She throws us into this stuff, but I'm the one that goes and does them. So, she says it's in Springfield. I said, "Springfield, Tennessee? No it's Springfield, Kentucky." So we get through setting up everything so that we can go and I get the paper and I'm like, "Chick, this is in Ohio. It's 5 ½ hours away. It's not over the hill."

CF: A [Expletive deleted] magazine that's based in Kentucky asked us to do it. They did not ask us to drive.

TAM: So, Chelsea assumes that it's close to them.

KS: Ok, so you went to Ohio?

TAM: We loaded up the truck and drove to Ohio. We stayed the weekend and I'm like, "Oh, I just want to kill you sometimes." [Laughs]

CF: It's all good. Anyways, with money, yes, we do [expletive deleted] – it just keeps on going up. The store actually brings in a lot more income than we thought it would.

TAM: Yeah, it does.

CF: We just needed to pay the [expletive deleted] rent. We were hoping that the store up there would pay the rent for everything back here.

KS: It does or it doesn't?

CF: It does, yes.

TAM: Yeah, it's been doing well. We also had the on-line to back us up and keep us going, but we wanted the other income to pay for the building here.



CF: That is a big mistake. I feel like in a small town (not that this is the tiniest town ever), but in a small business the mistake is having the one source of income as a storefront. We're not even in one place online. We're on Etsy and we have our website. So, we advertise for ourselves on our website and then on Etsy. And we get traffic from Etsy – just Etsy people searching. But then we also have the store, and we also do shows. We try and stay everywhere.

KS: You don't put all your eggs in one basket?

CF: No, because I feel like that's a really bad move, because then you're exhausting so much. If there's no market for whatever you have, then obviously that's not going to be good in your area. We didn't know if people would like our crazy California-looking store or not. They could be crabby because we're colorful – we didn't know. I had no idea of what they expected. I was just like, "We need a store."

TAM: We didn't know about Henderson, but we did...

CF: We needed a space.

TAM: ...know we were coming in between two really good restaurants that had just opened.

CF: And you can see the river.

KS: It's a really nice spot.

TAM: Yeah, it is. The restaurant next door is also nice because people come and see our display out front even though we're not open at night. Maybe they'll be like, "Hey, what's that? I'll have to come back!"

KS: Yeah.

TAM: And we've had several people come in and say, "I was out and you were closed when I walked by, but I had to come back."

KS: So it seems that you would say "Location, location, location" is true? That's what they tell us in marketing.

CF: Yeah.

TAM: Yeah, I do agree with that because you've got to be where the people are and where the people are going to see you even if you are not open all the time, because it might make people want to come back and check out what you've got. There's a Blues Festival coming up and all kinds of stuff that happens down here on the riverfront, but we don't open for them because everybody has told us that you're nothing but a bathroom. They're looking for a bathroom as they walk through the town. So, we don't open during those things. Most of it happens when we wouldn't be open other than Saturday, but we do our window up really cool and make sure that we have a decent display up there and then we close.

KS: I hadn't even thought about that.

TAM: Yeah, so it's good in a way because, then they generally close the street when all that goes on. Because they close that street, you can't get anywhere. So if they close our street then nobody's parking down here. So it's kind of a Catch-22 on whether to be open or not be open. You've got people walking by but then they're not coming to do that anyways. They're going straight down there [in reference to the event]. They might look, but they're headed down there. So we found that it's better to stay closed and not try to be open for those things.

KS: You want to be memorable, but you don't want to just be a bypass.

CF: Or a bathroom.

TAM: Yes.

KS: How has your product line changed? And if it did, then why did you change it? Obviously you get new stuff.

CF: Copycats – that's why we changed. We had copycats.

KS: I didn't start following you all until probably 2010 or 2011 or somewhere around there, so I didn't see any of the Etsy stuff.

CF: Our fans on Facebook are a little bit psychotic sometimes, because for a while I was getting several messages a week saying, "This person is doing silk wrap bracelets!"

TAM: They were like, "They're copying you!"

CF: They were getting so mad over stuff – they were contacting them! And I’m like, “Oh [expletive deleted], people sending people emails and I’m not looking so good.” But from that we said, “Ok, what else can we learn to do? What else can we take on to be different than anybody else – to make our stuff more unique and more original?” That’s when she started doing the PMC [precious metal clay] stuff. She is sitting here hand sculpting and making everything. I started doing stamping because you may be able to stamp, but we’re working right now on getting original stamps and things like that – just to think outside the box. Because when you’re just stringing bracelets, like what we were doing, then anybody can do that. They just have to try and find beads like yours.

TAM: And we want to be the first to do it – that’s what she’s been good at.

CF: You need to be the most well known. That’s how I feel about this.

TAM: And then don’t worry about who’s trying to copy you.

CF: Because 500 other people could be out there trying to sell silk wrap bracelets, but if you already know us as the brand that makes the silk wrap bracelets, then it doesn’t matter.

TAM: You’ve got it.

CF: It looks like they are copying us. Even if they were out there first and we didn’t even know it – we’re the bigger name. We just want to be the most well known.

KS: So, you’re saying you didn’t necessarily change to fit demand, you just tried to make your own demand.

CF: Yeah, we just tried to stand out more, so that people couldn’t copy us as easily.

TAM: Yeah, sometimes we will make something and she’ll put it on Facebook or Instagram and we’ll get, “Oh that’s cute!” and then some of them say, “I’ve got to have that! Where do I get that?” So then we know what to continue and what to drop.

CF: We ask for input a lot. We’ll have contests on pendants and silk wraps and ask what they want to see on them and if we decide to use their phrase or whatever that they picked, then we send them one for free.

TAM: That's where the Carpe Diem came from.

CF: "Carpe Diem," "Hakuna Matata," "Just breathe" – all kinds of different ones.

KS: Those are my two favorites. The "Carpe Diem" and "Just breathe."

CF: So, all those came from customers input on things. We need to do that again soon. I should do that this week. I'll do it through the weekend.

TAM: Wait until I get back.

CF: I was going to pick a different person every day.

TAM: Ok.

KS: You had copycats – that could be another reason why products were changed. What about product failures? Have you ever had a product failure – something you actually had to trash? Something that just did not sell.

CF: There have been designs that we've gotten rid of in the silk wraps. I don't feel like it is worth the time to even have it on the website because it doesn't sell.

TAM: We put stuff up and if we don't sell it... That's another good thing about the store too is that we have extra stuff. She'll order an assortment of colors and we'll get in a green that's not our thing. You just make them up and put them up front and somebody will buy them. With product failure, I just had one I put up there. When I do my bronze sometimes it bubbles. I've actually got one up here I'll show you. It bubbles and it looks funny and I decided that I would put it out front and see what it does. They sell because people like them. So, that one's not so bad. See how this has the little bubbles on it?

KS: I like that.

TAM: I don't know how to do more of them because I don't know what happened. So, I can't make another one.

KS: Well, it's sort of like the old Greek coins. They have that rough, weathered appearance. I like that.

TAM: I like it, but that's not something that I would send out in an order when you see it differently on the website. So, therefore, I put them out front or I take them to a show, and they're usually the first one to go, but I can't send that to you when you saw a picture of one not like that.

KS: You need a section on your site to put misfits. We don't really know how this happened, but we think they're cool, and if you want one, the first person to get to it, gets it.

TAM: Well, I kind of did that at a show because this one girl. I had one that said, "Live Your Fairy Tale" and she was like, "[Expletive deleted], I love that one!" and then she set it down and somebody else picked it up. I looked at Kayla and she was like, "That is really cool." I'm like, "I hope they don't ask me to make another one because I don't know how to do it." So, I've had some struggles with the bronze as I was saying before. The bronze is really hard to work with. It fires differently. It's been a pain. So, it's been a definite learning curve on the bronze. The silver was pretty easy. When I got into the silver it didn't take me very long to get it going.

### Katherine Sellers Interview – Part 3

KS: Kady Sellers

TAM: Tammy Asher Morse

CF: Chelsea Farmer

KS: So, that paint actually sticks to that surface?

CF: Uh huh. I spray it with clear coat. I paint it on and then I rough it up with the steel wool so it doesn't look fancy painted. Then I clear coat it.

KS: Very cool. Well, it matches your nail polish.

CF: Oh, shucks.

KS: Yesterday we talked about how your products were available on Etsy. Immediately after that did you start working on the business on-line? Was that your original goal for the business to be on-line?

CF: Yes, because I lived in Newburg and didn't know a [expletive deleted] soul or anything about the area. So, the goal was to work from home on-line. We didn't really ever have plans of opening a store front because it was so much left over I had to worry about. Working from home online was the original plan.

KS: I see. It was definitely a good decision. That was one of my questions. So, you managed the on-line component of the business?

CF: Yes.

KS: You managed it. Do either of you have backgrounds in digital media? Have you ever done it before?

CF: Nope.

KS: Studied it at all?

CF: Nope.

TAM: Everything we've ever done has pretty much been learning it on our own. I used to work at a graphic place and I learned all that on my own.

CF: Yeah, and whatever I did in high school. I took some different classes like CAD and stuff in high school. I didn't really take any computer classes for design. It's been kind of just figuring it out. Even when we were working at the same company, I did all their inspection reports and I just figured it out and made out my own templates and everything for that – which they still use. So, we just figure it out on our own. I know that sounds crazy and that's probably not the answer that somebody wants if they're just trying to figure out how to do it, but we literally figured it out on our own. It's how we've done everything.

KS: Well, how did you do that? Did you use Google?

CF: I used Google – literally just Google. I watched tutorials on YouTube. That’s how I learned how to use GIMP, which is free software like Photoshop that I use. Every time I want to know how to do something with it I just Google it. Such as with our website that we have now. It’s with Magento, which is the same one that Tongs and different companies use, and every time I want to figure out how to do something I go to their knowledge base that they have on their website and search through. They have a search bar and I just search for what I am trying to figure out how to do on the website. Every time I wanted to change our shipping or I wanted to change anything I didn’t want to have to rely on somebody else. Having another person that you have to rely on to get things done like that just slows you down on everything.

TAM: Well, back in my day when I learned Corel, there was no Google. You just had to sit there until you figured it out.

CF: Well, it was also not as advanced as it is now either. It was a lot more basic.

KS: I think that’s really hard for some people when they don’t have that go-getter kind of personality.

CF: Yeah.

KS: They say, “I don’t know what I’m doing, therefore, I…”

TAM: ...can’t do it.

CF: Then you probably shouldn’t try and have your own business either, because if all you’re going to do is try and sit there and figure out how many other people could be doing something then at some point you would have to delegate and out-source things. If everything for you starting your business requires you needing someone else, then you’re probably in the wrong business. If you need somebody to create your website, and do your social media, and make an ad if you want to advertise somewhere – if every single thing you do you constantly need someone else to do it, then you’re probably not in the right business. You have to be able to do stuff on your own and not just sit there and constantly have people around you that are doing everything because then you’re basically not doing anything but coming up with ideas.

Eventually you can probably get like that, but from the get-go that’s not going to help you at all, because you’re never going to make any money.

TAM: I think one of the things that helps us too is that she wants to design all of the ads we do and so our ads stand out from the typical ones. If you just let the newspaper do it, then everybody's looks the same.

CF: Everybody's ads look the same. You can drive down the highway and see billboards that look identical. Even Simon Shoes and the car dealership – one after another it's the exact same color scheme – everything is the same. You would not know that one is for shoes and one is for cars. All you have to do is look at it and you think it's for the same thing, because it's the exact color scheme, fonts, and everything. I'm like, "Wow." And they're one right after another. They weren't even trying to be different. I think it helps us because I have a different mind than whoever is designing every ad for the Courier Press around here. I don't design like they do. Every ad we do I always ask up front if I can design the ads because I want us to stand out. Even our billboards we're designing.

TAM: They tend to use the same fonts.

CF: We've always been really good with branding. We've had our Logo exactly the same. We've not changed our logo since probably six months in. We didn't love it at first, and then we got one that we love and that was the end of it. We never changed it again. The same fonts that we use on our website we also use on our business cards and in our ads. I went and did a show in Dallas and our banners on the front of the table people saw before they even looked at the jewelry. They had seen the logo where it said "HorseFeathers" and walked over because they knew me from Facebook. So, we just have to get it into people's heads. We really try to stand out like I've said eight thousand times. [Laughs]

KS: If you do it yourself then you get "you" in it as opposed to...

CF: Yeah, you have your touch in it rather than.

KS: I think we talked a little bit about this, but how did you manage to get all the publicity for HorseFeathers? Was it by chance or was it something you sat down and said, "Ok, we've got to get ourselves out there; therefore, I'm going to look for ways to get publicity"?

CF: I just looked for places and started contacting people. I really don't have a fear of rejection. For some reason I don't care.



TAM: No matter how big it is and what we have to do to do it – we'll do it.

CF: I'm not worried about it. If somebody's going to say "no" then we'll just find somebody else that'll say "yes." We learned at "Spark and Hustle" when we went there and heard Tori Johnson talk about how she couldn't get a job in New York after she got let go from one job. She says that it's a "maybe" until it's a "no." So, until somebody says, "No, we do not want you. We do not want to work with you." then just keep on talking to people until they say "yes" or "no" or "possibly in the future." Don't just give up.

So, I basically just harass people in a really nice way. I kept our story. I always talk about that we are a mother/daughter duo and how we got started. Then I say, "Here's our bio page if you want to read more." And I always tell them about our products. So that's one of the things. Every time I send someone an email I don't just say, "Oh, we have this jewelry company and I was wondering if you wanted to feature us?" No, I am always very specific on everything.

TAM: One thing on that too is that she [motioning to Chelsea] found a girl on the Internet (like we do everybody else) or on Facebook. I don't know how you found the girl that wrote our biography, but with us having the language that we have that she found this girl and said, "Hey, we're crazy chicks, we wear this, we're like this, and now in writing you make us sound the way that we sound.

CF: Yeah, we work with her and she actually is a writer – she's a freelance writer because her husband's in the Navy. I found her through social media – through Facebook.

KS: Just randomly?

CF: Yes, she's just a random person that I don't even know. She's in California now. She's moved three times I think since we've known her. Her name is Tiffany. She's pitched to media for us. She'll be talking to somebody and all of a sudden be like, "Oh, you need to write about these people." She knows different people who write for different papers. She's 26 - the same age as me. She just started pitching us to people because she liked our story and like working with us because we are more fun than the typical stuffy businessperson. I think that was when people started hearing about us.

We did a Martha Stewart interview. She had this website called “Dreamers and To-doers.” It’s still running, but I don’t know what they’re doing now. At the time it was a community where all kinds of artists from all over would communicate and help push each other’s businesses and talk about all kinds of business stuff like that. Basically, it’s a forum. Think about it. Anyways, I started talking to different people in there and they had this thing where they would feature a “Doer of the Week” we were featured in 2010 or 2011.

TAM: Thereabouts.

CF: In 2010 or 2011 we were on there, which helped even more because then when I pitched to people I could say, “We’ve been featured on...” So, then every time I was pitching to anybody else I was always trying to say where we’d been featured so it sounded like we had been places and that we weren’t trying to act like we were something we weren’t. We said, “People have given us attention and you should too!” I always make us sound bigger than we are and now it’s the opposite. Now people think we are way bigger than we are.

TAM: When we’re really just sitting here in our jammie pants...

CF: I’ve tried to have us perceived as a “big deal,” because I always had this mindset that we were going to be big. I’ve always made us sound big to people, so now when people talk to us they think we are huge. I’m sure the advertising people that we had from Google and the Courier Press in here were confused. I was sitting over there, Indian style, braiding my hair while they were talking to me and I’m like, “I have a sense that this probably doesn’t happen too often, does it? [Laughs] It was just kind of funny because we try and always be ourselves, and I think that really helps us get more attention and more coverage, rather than just sending a plain little press release typed very formally. We’re just ourselves.

TAM: We’re not formal.

CF: Some people don’t think it’s professional, but that’s who we are so that’s how we’ve tried to get people to perceive us.

KS: People like real people.

CF: Yeah, I think that's been the biggest thing. I am on this "Horo" thing. I don't know if you've heard about this, but it's reporters from all over the world that will post when they're looking for something to write a story on. We've been in several magazines because they're looking for eco-friendly products and I'm like, "PITCH!" So then I'll send them a link to it and I'll attach a photo and then I'll say, "Let me know if you have any questions. We can get you a sample ASAP!" I'm always ready.

KS: Where did you find this?

CF: Tiffany told me about it and apparently it's huge. They send out probably 15 emails a day – I get emails constantly from them. You just read through them. We actually almost got into an ordeal with going on a mother and daughter reality show until we realized that it was probably not what we wanted to do.

TAM: It was about stupid Kentucky girls...

CF: When we realized that they really wanted to perceive us as like crazy rednecks, we decided that we probably shouldn't do it. [Laughing] I got one of those emails and I found that on there. It was looking for mother/daughter duos who are more like friends and I was like, "That's so us! So, we sent them a picture and we went through all the details and then once we got to the final stage of talking to them and us reading the final email, I was like, "I think we're just going pass on this because it's starting to sound a little weird." We had to live in a house with a whole bunch of mother/daughter duos. It was crazy.

Anyway, we've seen some bizarre stuff on there, but most of it you just have to be willing to do the work. I think the biggest problem is people say, "Well, I can't do that." You have to be impulsive. The Green Living Magazine that we got into – they needed a sample the next day, so we overnighted a sample to them. That's why we got in the magazine. You have to be willing to do stuff quickly and not sit there and think about it for weeks, because then nothing's ever going to happen. You're just going to be an average la-di-da person.

KS: Going back to the freelance writer. You said you found her on Facebook?

CF: Yes.

KS: But how? Was she a fan?

CF: No, I saw a business pages. If you follow someone's business page, then you see people having conversations on there. I click on people all the time. I'm like, "Well who's this?" For instance: Tiffany Silverberg, freelance writer and reporter. I was like, "Well, what does she do?" So I clicked on her and read her page and she was running a special for like \$25 for a bio page. So I was like "All right!" Then I started talking to her on the phone. Now we just randomly talk all the time. Basically we just hit it off once we did a little phone interview to see. I knew we really needed somebody to write a bio because I would suck at it. It's really hard to talk about yourself. Now she's actually written our policy page, our giving back page, etc. Any time we have something come up we just ask her and it's freelance, so she only charges us per time that we use her. That's something that's really nice, because then you don't have to have somebody on staff that you're constantly worrying about. If you have someone on staff then you worry because you need stuff for them to write because you're paying them. It's totally freelance now.

So many of the people that we've met are because we were doing giveaways on Facebook and stuff like that. We got to the Oscars Talent Suite because I met a girl through a giveaway. She apparently loved our stuff and started following us. I had met her brand and was already following her company. She does all of the celebrity gifting because she lives in California. She put in a good word for us for the Oscars Talent Suite, and they called and asked if we wanted to come out there.

It has all been people seeing our personality come through in our business and so they have wanted to help us or put in a good word for us somewhere. We've gotten where we are from social media, because people are just spreading the word, which is good. If you have something that people like then they are going to continue to talk about it.

KS: Explain the Oscars to me.

CF: It's a talent suite. They have quite a few different ones in the area. The one that we did was supposed to be more of a talent suite than a gifting suite. It's supposed to be the up-and-coming designers and brands that want to let the celebrities know about them – mainly because they can endorse your product. We got our stuff on a couple of shows because we were there meeting people and being ourselves. It was in a nightclub, but it used to be something else.

TAM: Avalon.

CF: It's Avalon, but it used to be something else. It was a fancy-looking, crazy old theater. It was a theater back in the day. It was super-crazy cool, and you set up a table of your products and the celebrities come through. The person who hosted the event invited the celebrities. There were probably over 150 celebrities that came. They come through and you just tell them about your product. I think that's when it makes a really big difference, because you are seeing them in person and they're getting your personality with your products, so it's kind of cool. Plus everybody there was from California except for us. People were asking us where we were from and all kinds of different stuff the whole time.

TAM: Especially when I mentioned barn-wood. I didn't get it. I'm like, "Why is it that every time I tell somebody that this is pushed into barn-wood they're like, 'Where are you from?'" They said, "Well there're not a whole lot of barns in LA." so I was like, "Oh, ok..."

KS: So this was in LA?

CF: Yeah.

KS: I know nothing about any of this stuff. [Laughing]

CF: It was actually in Hollywood – right out of Hollywood.

TAM: It's where the stars are on the sidewalk.

CF: Yeah, it's wherever you walk by stars. That's where it is. We don't know anything about California either.

TAM: Yeah.

CF: We deal with people in California all the time, though.

TAM: We were pretty dumb there. We were worried about all of the TV stars walking up to us and we were like, "We don't watch TV, so we're not going to know who the [expletive deleted] they are!"

CF: So, that's what we did.

KS: I don't even know any of those people [motioning to a picture on the wall]. I know of that lady, but I don't even know what her name is.

CF: I don't know her.

KS: She looks really familiar [pointing again to the picture], but I don't know who she is.

CF: She looks like she likes plastic surgery.

KS: It's true.

TAM: Thankfully, though, a person came with each celebrity. That woman is on "All my Children" or something like that. Anyway, they had a young person (a 13 or 14-year-old) that carried a bag with their stuff and they would tell you whom they were when they walked up.

CF: They had a little person that walked with them because they were taking pictures with everybody. So they come up to your table, then you tell them about your products, then you let them pick something out, and then they take photos with it. Basically it's like endorsing your product right there on the spot.

KS: That's where all these pictures came from?

CF: Yes, well some of them don't even have jewelry on in the picture because people hung out with us forever. We backed up a line. They were supposed to be with us for a minute – tops – and just keep going through, but we were having five or ten-minute conversations with people. They put us right beside the bar, too. It was the perfect spot. People were hanging out with us. We still email with quite a few of them. It was interesting.

KS: And you heard about the Oscars how?

CF: I had done a giveaway, and another small business that lives in California entered. The owner's name is April. She's actually getting ready to go on her final audition for the TV show Shark Tank before she's actually on the show. She had been doing these gifting suites already, but I don't even know how she got into them. She had been doing them for a while with this same company and they were looking for new participants. They are always looking for new ones. They don't want you at the same ones. So, she doesn't even do them now. She did them for

a full year and went to every different one. She went to the Oscars, Emmys – all the different ones because they always had different celebrities. Then it comes to the end of it and you don't go back because you were the up-and-coming and then you're done. So, she had already been doing them and just told the person who's in charge of getting the talent about us. It was just word-of-mouth. And this girl had never bought anything from us – not a thing. She just followed us on Facebook. We talked on Facebook through our business pages, and that's it. I got an email and then a phone call from April of "Shea Chic," and I was like, "I don't even know this girl really." Now we're personal friends on Facebook and we talk all the time. We help each other, too.

TAM: She was there waiting for us to help us get our stuff out of my car, too.

CF: Yeah, we pulled up there in our little rental car. She was waiting and she was like, "Chelsea!" We had been talking on Facebook so much because I was asking her advice like, "What the [expletive deleted] do we bring? What's going to happen?" So I went through her pictures and looked at her experiences.

So, yes, she was waiting there to meet us. It was all crazy, but it was a really cool experience. As soon as we got back, they called and wanted us to go to the one for the Academy Awards, but we didn't do because we had just gotten back. We were so behind on orders from the Fox News interview that caused crazy website sales, so we didn't go to the Academy Awards. The guy that runs that talent suite called us back right after the Academy Awards ended and he was like, "I don't know much about jewelry or what you do, but people were asking where you were." The people we had met at the Oscars were asking why we weren't at the Academy Awards. I was like, "Well, we can't just come to California all the time."

TAM: We were scared we wouldn't know anybody and that guy [motioning to a picture]...

CF: ...Kyle Massey.

TAM: Yeah.

KS: That's hilarious.

CF: He ran up to us and gave us both a hug.

TAM: We were just laughing.

CF: He was actually there to DJ the event. He was the DJ the rest of the day up on stage and introduced people and fun stuff like that. It was just so bizarre because there are a bunch of different celebrity gifting suites that go on and we had worked with one and did the American Music Awards and designed this exclusive bracelet that we sold. We sold it on our website and then there was one given away at the American Music Awards. Well, Kyle Massey's mom went with them (him and his brother) and she picked it out. She loved it. I guess she wore it and he remembered our logo, the display, and everything.

They loved the display and everything that we had it on. Well, it had our logo and our business cards with it. So that's what he recognized when he walked up to us in LA. It was just insane. Our photographer was trying to quickly snap pictures. She was like, "What's happening right now? Why is this guy hugging you and we're in LA?" It was just kind of crazy.

TAM: Then there was this other guy. Chelsea was like, "Who is that?" and I'm like, "I don't know. I watched a movie last night and he was in it." I like recognized him.

CF: She watched the movie when we were on the plane. She was like, "I just watched you in a movie last night."

KS: Who was it?

TAM: Danny Bucco. I love westerns and I watched it on the plane. Then when he walked up I was like, "I know you!" He named a couple of shows and I was like, "No, no, no, no. You were in a western. You were the bad guy and you were not very nice." That's one of the first things I said to him. He started cracking up, and then he was over there talking to me. He hung out with us forever. It was funny.

CF: Yeah, we had quite a few of them that just hung out and wanted to know about how we make everything and I guess our life or whatever.

TAM: It was funny how many of them asked where we were from because it was obvious we weren't from there. And then several of them grew up in like South Bend, Indiana, or Nashville, Tennessee. They were all from different places, but moved out to California because of a movie



deal. We were nervous at first because we didn't know what to say to them all, but once they came up and we got going we were fine.

CF: Or they would walk up and be like, “[Expletive deleted], what’s this?” and then I was like, “Yeah!” Then we would tell them that this was some awesome stuff they needed.

TAM: We started being us and I swear – we did not stop. She had one person, I had one person, and sometimes we each had two people. We talked the whole day and never even got to drink or eat. Chelsea was about to pass out and ate a banana.

CF: I had to hide behind our friend taking photos to eat a banana really quick. I was hiding in a corner while she took pictures.

KS: Wow.

CF: Yeah, but they ended and we were done.

TAM: They wanted us to come back to the after party and we were like, “The faster we can get out of this Spanx the better. [Laughing]

CF: Let me tell you: Do not wear Spanx if you are going to an event like this because –holy bananas – by the end of it we were all done.

TAM: Yeah, I felt like it was in my throat. [Laughing]

CF: It was horrible, and yet we got invited to the after party. We were all starving and so exhausted, but now looking back we probably should have just drank a [expletive deleted] coffee and gone. We were so tired and hadn't eaten all day. We were just done.

KS: How long was this event?

CF: We had to be there at 8:00 am, because we had to set up our table, and the celebrities got there at 9:30.

TAM: They were supposed to get there at 10.

CF: We were set up quickly, though. I was on it. Shows and me – we got it. I know how I want things and where I want them, so that was really easy. Then I went and helped April, the Shea

Chic girl because she was there too. She was everywhere. She was a hot mess. She's not very good at shows. It went until about 5:00

TAM: Something like that. It went a lot longer than us...

KS: You were on your feet talking with no food...

CF: Yeah...

KS: ...from 8 until 5?

CF: Uh-huh.

TAM: I didn't even go to the bathroom, but we didn't drink anything either.

CF: I did, but it was difficult trying to get the Spanx back on. I was like, "Whoo! It's like a sweaty wetsuit!" I was about to throw them in the trash and say, "No more Spanx here!" but we were all paranoid about seeing ourselves in pictures with celebrities. I'm half the same size as these people in real life. They don't look like it on TV. Nope, they're not as flawlessly skinny as you think.

KS: Tell me about Shark Tank. We talked about it at lunch, but I'm completely unfamiliar.

TAM: You don't watch Shark Tank?

KS: No, I don't watch a lot of TV.

CF: On Shark Tank you go on the show and you pitch your business idea to them. They want personalities because you're going on TV.

TAM: There is a chick on there – she's got really short blond hair – and she gives financial advice. She's one of the people that is on Shark Tank.

CF: It's a bunch of different business people – they are investors – and they all own different companies. None of them just own one company, they all own a bunch of them and that's the whole point of the show that they are investing in different companies.

TAM: They will buy your company.

CF: So anyways, they want you to pitch your idea to them. Then you're pitching your idea saying that you're wanting money from them or for them to invest in your company so that you can expand or grow it. You have to tell them everything about your income such as your profits from the business. If they think your product is nothing, then they're not going to invest.

TAM: And they will tell you that. They're mean and very blunt about it.

KS: So it's for you to get funding?

CF: Basically, yes. And they should be blunt because just like not everybody needs to be a supermodel – not everybody needs to have a business. I'm pretty straightforward about stuff with people, too, so I tell the people on Shark Tank. I want somebody to tell you rather than sugarcoat the [expletive deleted], and five years later you are still trying to do it when somebody could have just told you back in the day, "This [expletive deleted] ain't going to work for you!"

KS: Yes.

CF: That's something they should have just told that person instead of sitting here with rainbows and unicorns everywhere. Anyway, they will invest in your company so that your company can grow. The first thing they say to do is outsource; so then you are automatically overseas. Also they are a part of your business after that, so they tell you that decisions are supposed to be made jointly. I don't know how jointly it works, but basically you have a business partner in them, which is like their team of people probably, because they're all millionaires.

KS: Interesting.

CF: Yeah.

TAM: Sometimes they will say, "I'll give you 50 thousand dollars and buy your company right now." and then you can walk away. You decide to do that or take a percent or whatever.

CF: Like April, our friend that wants to do it. She wants to be in resorts and spas everywhere. She wants to get much bigger. I don't think she cares if she makes it; she just wants it to still be natural, because all her products are natural. Other than that I don't think she cares who makes it.

TAM: She was working in her house and then moved to her garage and now she's gotten to where she may end up on Shark Tank.

KS: Oh, so it kind of depends on the focus of your business?

CF: Yes. She's very different than us in that aspect.

TAM: With us I think they would argue that all we have is jewelry. They would wonder what made us any different than anybody else.

CF: "We" are why we're different.

KS: If you remove you...

CF: If you remove us, what does that do?

TAM: Yeah.

CF: Then we just have jewelry again.

KS: That makes sense. You said that you were the one to take care of the marketing. Tell me about your web design and the logo design. Did you Google all of that and figure out how to make logos?

CF: The logo design is actually done by a photographer friend of ours. She figured out how to do it on her own. I had no idea. She even drew our horseshoe and feather. We already had the name, so we just told her what we wanted and she did that all on her own. We told her what color scheme to use and that was the end of it. We wanted vintage-looking colors, a fun font, and a horseshoe and a feather somehow because that is our name. That was completely her doing, and we liked it. I think that she had hot pink and we changed it to coral, but that's about it. Otherwise we liked what she did.

TAM: She draws a lot of our stuff.

CF: Yes, she handwrote that "Happy" stamp. She writes it and it goes onto a screen and then she designs her own fonts. We work with her a lot, because she's local.

As far as the web design, I went online and searched for it. Everything I've done has been looking at other businesses that I like or websites that I like. At the bottom of your page it normally tells you who designed the site, so that's when I started looking to see who designed them. We started with a really basic one that was super-easy to use, and now we have one that is a lot more complex because we needed a lot more functions. I probably would have died had we started out with this website to begin with. I would have had no idea what was happening. So, we started out and then grew our website. We just switched our website over. And that was all just by looking for people and looking through their portfolios to see what they did. I think our first website was \$150 for the template, and then you pay \$12.95 a month for hosting – it was basically nothing.

KS: You said that you designed your billboards and ads in newspapers. Do you draw them?

CF: Yes, I design them on the computer.

KS: And you figured out how to do that with Google?

CF: And YouTube videos. You do not even need to go to college – just use [expletive deleted] Google.

KS: So, you're telling me that if I want to design a billboard, then I just type it in?

CF: No, I didn't know how I wanted our billboard to look, so I didn't know how to design it. It's all in the same. Once you know how to design an ad you can design any size ad. It doesn't matter once you figure out one. As far as billboard style, I looked to see what Tiffany & Co. does, because I like how all their billboards that I've seen are very clean and crisp and they get their point across. That's exactly what we're doing is Tiffany style billboards. It's just from looking at other people's stuff.

TAM: My nephew had a billboard out here on the strip and so we were talking one day and we said, "Well, we'll just do a billboard like that." So then I called him and I said, "Hey, hook us up with a billboard chick." So she came.

KS: You pay attention to what you like?

CF: Yes, I pay attention to other businesses that I like that are successful.

KS: Do you pay attention to what you don't like?

CF: I don't make black and white ads.

KS: I don't think you like black.

CF: I am very straightforward with people. Our product sells because of our product. People don't listen, though. They say that we can do an ad in the paper and I'm like, "It's a [expletive deleted] black and white. Nobody is going buy our jewelry because they saw it in [expletive deleted] black and white ad. That's stupid as [expletive deleted]" In my head I already know I would not see an ad like this and buy whatever it is, so why would I sit here and design an ad for someone to use in that context? I would never look at that and buy it, so why would I think somebody else would? What makes us want to buy something? It's not because of what the [expletive deleted] sales person said that comes here and tries to get us to buy these [expletive deleted] black and white placemat ads on a regular basis. That dude probably thought I was the biggest [expletive deleted] in the world, but I'm like, "These ads are not for a business like ours." It was in red – not even black and white. It was in [expletive deleted] red and cream. They were printing it on cream in red ink. That's for a service like if you like need a [expletive deleted] washer repaired. If you're sitting at dinner, you're not going to look at those rings and say, "We need to go there now!"

KS: Placemats? What kind of placemats?

TAM: Ones from little mom-and-pop restaurants – like little burger places and diners.

CF: We are not a little mom-and-pop burger restaurant, you advertising people. That does not make sense. It's just stupid stuff that they will try and sell you and you have learn to say "no." That's the biggest thing. You have to be able to be forward with people, because if you just tell people that you aren't really sure then they're going to harass you 24/7. I tell people, "We're not doing this. Go find a business like a laundry mat or somebody that would profit from being on a placemat, but we are not going to be profiting from a [expletive deleted] placemat ad." Nobody takes it with them they just get their food and [expletive deleted] all over it. It doesn't even make sense. It's the stupidest thing I've ever been asked to do – the black and white ads in the

newspaper. I'm said, "No. We don't do black and white." That's all I said – "We don't do black and white ads." That's the end of the story.

You have to put yourself in the buyer's shoes. For instance – "Where would I look for an auto shop or whatever? Where would you look for things like that? I don't think it would be smart for us to pay for an ad in a phonebook, but there are some places that it is really smart for them to do that, because then you're the first one. If you're like, "Oh [expletive deleted], my A/C just went out!" then you're just looking for a big A/C ad and that sells it, but you're probably not going to look through the phone book for a boutique down town – nobody does that. So, it's just stuff like that where I think about how people buy and then I do the same thing with the business.

KS: You have to think like a buyer.

CF: Yes.

KS: We talked about getting your name out there. If you were to summarize how you got the HorseFeathers name so well known, what would you say it was?

CF: Branding, because we literally use it on everything. People will change their logo, change their name, and do re-branding all the time, but we don't. That is one thing that we have always loved – our brand. We've contemplated changing it before and then we decided that we needed to just stick with it. The only thing we've ever changed is some colors on it, but otherwise we always use the same logo and we use the logo on everything. There's not a thing that we do that we don't put the logo on it.

KS: It's stamped on the back of this bracelet.

CF: Yeah.

KS: I haven't looked at every piece of jewelry,

CF: Most of it has it on there. We can't put in on some of the stuff, but we try and keep the logo on everything. I think one of the most important things is not changing your logo all the time because I feel like a logo is your trademark. It's your signature that helps people to remember your company. If you keep changing it, then people won't know it's the same if it doesn't look

the same. I don't feel like it's as strong as it would be if you just pick something and stick with it.

TAM: Well, just like if you go to the boutique that we're working with in Michigan, and you see the logo that you've seen somewhere else, then you'll remember it.

CF: Because it's on our wholesale packaging, too. It's on literally everything.

KS: We've talked some about competition, but what does the competition look like for your products? And how are you combatting it? Do you have any people that are copying you?

CF: We have seen people take that saying on your bracelet and stamp it with these metal stamps on a plain metal bar, but I don't think anyone has figured out how we do what we do. There's another person in Kentucky that makes silk wraps, and she uses rubber stamps you can get at Hobby Lobby. We do not do that because we work with our designer, Tiffany. Everything we use is unique to us. We design everything. People that are copying us are saying, "Well, I can just go buy these supplies and do the same thing" but you can't just go buy the supplies that we're using. You can buy the metal, and you can buy a stamp, but you're not going to buy what we have going on. We try to make it so that people can't copy us. People can to an extent, but not really.

KS: What about these feathers. Are they hand drawn?

CF: These are not. These are made from a cast.

TAM: We do make our own casts, though.

CF: We've obviously been painting it, so we try to find ways to make them different. People like feather earrings. I make painted feather earrings, so they don't look like all the other feather earrings. Mine are different colors. You can get them in a variety of colors. We just try and do stuff like that. We offer bangles. Some people would offer just the plain bangle, but we paint the bangles, so that they have a more custom feel to them. All of our metal bars and all of our signature stuff that we sell are unique, which I think helps.

TAM: As far as combatting the competition, I don't think we do. I think we just move forward and we don't worry about what everybody else is doing.



CF: When people copy me, it motivates me. I'm really bad at that because I'm like, "[Expletive deleted] watch this! I don't get upset when people copy us, because I will so one-up them. I don't have that problem at all, because it just doesn't affect me. I've never been a really competitive person with things, but when they do something, then I'll just do something else. I just think of what we can do to be different. Every time someone copies us I ask, "What else can we do to be different?" People were copying us with silks and trying to get the same colors, but now we have silks that you can't even buy the same colors.

TAM: They were copying us so much that we now buy the silks and then she makes up her own names for them.

CF: We have very southern names for them and people were copying our names. They would try and find silks like ours, but that weren't even the same, and then they would steal our exact names to name their silks. That's how bad it got. That was when one customer freaked out and sent some lady an email. The lady was trying to be all kind in her bio by talking about how religious she was and that she was a stay-at-home mom and blah, blah, blah, but I don't give a [expletive deleted] about that because she just copies people. I don't give a [expletive deleted] if you have 18 kids at home that you're trying to feed. I don't give a [expletive deleted]. You need to figure out your own [expletive deleted] instead of just trying to copy somebody. Obviously you don't have time to have your own business because all you're doing is copying somebody else anyways.

KS: Is there a way to protect the pieces?

CF: I'm sure there is.

TAM: You can copyright anything, but it's just expensive. It's about \$155 per item.

CF: I don't think it's worth the time. Some people think it's worth the time. People who never want anyone else to have their items will do it, but we'll just change items. We just constantly change, and that probably [expletive deleted] people off even more, because then they have to do more work. That's when we started doing all of our own designs because we used to use different rubber stamps that you could just go and buy, and then just try and do different textures

and things around them to make them different, but then we decided that that wasn't working because people were still copy us.

KS: So, the lady that was copying your silk wraps – what is she doing now? Do you ever hear from her?

CF: No, she only had 5 or so options for bars and “Carpe diem” was the only example she had on her website. It was like she literally did not have an original thought in her mind to come up with anything. Whatever we had was a sample to her. She just took a piece of metal and stamped phrases on them and was acting like they were the same thing as ours. Then she was selling them for half the price. I don't mind, though. It's not the same thing, so I really don't care.

KS: Wow.

TAM: You've seen what I do with all the metal stuff. People care that we make everything hand-made. It takes you a while to get your order because it takes me a while to make every piece

CF: We want to have somebody come in and do a video so that we have it on our website. It would play a video of the behind the scenes so people can see even more. We need to get in contact with that girl, because we need a video. I just want music playing on it, though; I don't want it to tell our process because then people would be copying that [expletive deleted] too. We don't want to give away too much detail; we just want to be close up on the stamping so you can't see all the tools that are lying around me.

TAM: People can Google how to do the PMC, but I also do stuff that I have figured out over the time and that does not need to be known.

CF: My answer, 99% of the time, is to Google it. I don't even understand it when people ask how I figured something out or how I learned to do something. If you use Google, then you have the whole [expletive deleted] Internet. Everything is out there – everything. All you have to do is look.

KS: It's out there. You just have to find it, right?

CF: Yep.

KS: Many people fear failure when they start a business. Did you think from the start that this business would make it this far?

CF: I hoped so. When we started the store, I said, “Oh...I hope people buy [expletive deleted] so we can pay our rent.” It could have been a really bad deal considering we signed a year lease and were going to have to pay rent no matter what.

TAM: We actually had some backup. We created a Groupon type thing, and we decided that if we needed to, and if we had the time, we could do one of those every month or every couple of months.

CF: We could do it every month, because it would at least cover all of our utilities here.

TAM: ...and our rent.

CF: Yes, and our rent.

KS: So, you had an emergency plan?

CF: Our emergency plan is to make an immense amount of [expletive deleted] and ship it within 24 hours. A lot of work within 24 hours on a deal site is our emergency plan. So if it comes down to it, we can always email them and ask them to put things up half-price or whatever. I don't think it will get to that point, though. We were definitely worried, though, because we had rent and we were already trying to keep up with the website and different things like that, so we were afraid it wasn't going to work.

TAM: We started at a bad time, too. We started in April, and so we were past Christmas and Valentines Day and headed into summer.

CF: We had Mother's Day and I knew we need people in here. I also knew we had a lot of Facebook fans, so I posted on Facebook that if you came in the Saturday before Mother's Day, I would stamp stuff. So, she [motioning to Tammy] would take orders up front, and I would stamp it within 10 minutes. We had men standing around everywhere up there.

TAM: Yeah, because men don't know what to get.

CF: Guys were coming in with a picture that their wife sent with them saying, “Go get this.” They’d come in and say, “This is what I need.” We try and think of ways to get people to come in and to make us stand out even more. You can go and get something engraved at one of the jewelry shops, but they’re going to give you a long turnaround, because I used to do it at one of those jewelry shops. We had a week turnaround there. That’s what our turnaround is here normally, but we usually call people within two days. In general, though, you wouldn’t think that you could get a personalized last minute gift like that, so we tried to offer something that we knew nobody else would be able to do. Those poor men – they felt awkward standing up there just waiting for me to bring them their order.

TAM: We had this one guy in Morganfield that walked in when we had the store and he walked over to a table and was like, “You moved stuff! It was right here! She showed me right here what she wanted.” It was like a panic light went on. We asked him what it was, but he said he didn’t even pay any attention, because it was right there. He was like, “I was just going to walk in here and pick it up, but you moved it across the store!” We ended up getting him something, but he was in a mode of panic.

KS: That’s hilarious. Was there ever a time when you felt like the business would go belly-up?

TAM: Nope.

KS: That’s good.

CF: A lot of people would have hired somebody by now.

KS: Yeah, they probably would have by now.

CF: We have not.

KS: Do you feel that pressure?

CF: She [motioning to Tammy] looks tired and I’m like, “Drink a [expletive deleted] coffee!”

TAM: What did you say? Do we feel that pressure now?

KS: Do you feel the pressure that you need to hire somebody? Do you feel like things are getting out of control with growth?

TAM: No.

CF: I feel like we could grow more if we had somebody. Since I do everything online, we're talking about hiring someone to work the store up front so that Ayla, who is currently working the store, can come help me with making items. I want to have a quicker turnaround for our retailers. I want a wholesale order to come in and go out within that week, which is a big order.

I want to get to that point, and I also want to be able to focus more on sending constant newsletters. I know there are things I should be doing, but they are not getting done because I'm so busy with stuff in here. It's getting to the point where I may need help. Mom's stress got released a little because we got some of our stuff cast. Besides this deal that we just did, she's fine. She's drinking plenty of coffee per week and she's going on vacation.

TAM: I leave tomorrow.

CF: [Expletive deleted] she can't really complain too much.

KS: You're going to float down the river, right?

TAM: Probably sleep while I'm doing it.

CF: I did two deals with you and my deal just ended today, so I've got 15 pendants to make.

TAM: I don't feel sorry for you at all.

CF: I know. I just keep on trucking!

KS: You must. Do you drink 5 Hour Energy drinks? How do you do all of this?

CF: I don't know. I guess I like what I do.

TAM: She's always been like this.

CF: I wake up in the morning and I'll call her and be like, "So... I have an idea." Then she's like, "Oh, boy..."

TAM: Then 30 minutes later the phone will ring again and I'm like, "Yes, what now?"

CF: I just constantly have ideas on things. I don't think we'll ever have a problem with not growing, because I feel like I will always think of something that we could be doing to further our growth. I'm always going to have new ideas and things are constantly going to be changing. That's the only way that we're going to keep people around to pay attention to what we are doing. You can't just do the same thing all the time and then expect to be anywhere different. It's not that we expect to be really far, but eventually we probably would like to open another location.

KS: Do you think that either of you have a particular component to your personality that allows you to thrive in entrepreneurship, and if so, what would that be?

CF: I think that my lack of a fear of rejection probably helps a lot, because every time I do an interview or anything, that question is always asked. I'm thinking, "Who the [expletive deleted] has this problem? What is wrong with you that you're so paranoid about what other people think all the time?"

KS: A lot of people have that problem.

CF: Which I'm starting to discover, because now you've asked me and every interview that we ever do people ask me.

TAM: I think part of it is that she has drive. Part of that is just in her, but living all over the U.S. like she did and meeting new friends and I guess having to not worry about what anybody thinks because it was always just me and her.

CF: I was constantly in new schools, too. If you've always gone to the same school people are very different to you. Even in high school I was friends with so many groups of people and they'd be like, "Well, so-and-so used to pick their nose in third grade" and I'd be like, "Well, I don't give a [expletive deleted]. Do they pick their nose now?" As long as they don't flick boogers on me, I don't care.

TAM: I was like that, too. I had friends that were lower income and then I had some rich friends. I had a variety of friends.

CF: My boyfriend in high school was super poor and my best friend was loaded. I never cared what people thought. I was always myself and did not care about what other people thought and things like that. It's the same as me telling people, "Look, I'm not advertising with you!" I don't really if you're [expletive deleted] at me. I'm not going to sugarcoat this – "I'm not doing it. I know it's not good for me" I think definitely not being discouraged by what other people think is good. Sometimes people say stuff and I'm like, "Well, [expletive deleted]!" or I'll act all hurt or cuss up a storm telling her [motioning to Tammy] about this little [expletive deleted] I just talked to on the phone, but for the most part nothing bothers me. Every time people are negative about something I'm just like, "Well, watch this." I was already motivated; you just motivated me even more. It doesn't discourage me by any means. It always just fuels me even more because now they've [expletive deleted]. There are people who are intentionally trying to bring you down. I think it makes them even more mad when I'm like, "Okay, whatever."

TAM: Yes, it makes both of us just want to prove them wrong, but I think her upbringing helped. And I did always try to put in her head that she could do anything she wanted to do because she's extremely smart. I told her to do what she wants to do and go with it. I was talking to someone not too long ago – it was the billboard lady – and she was like, "Well, apparently it worked!" I said, "I think it worked a little too much! She needs to tone that down just a little!"

KS: I was told that perseverance is the key to being an entrepreneur. Do you think you have a lot of perseverance in your work?

CF: Definitely.

TAM: Uh huh. We will do this.

CF: I just helped my best friend start a business this year. She had never done anything remotely crafty in her life and tried to make a wreath. It was the ugliest [expletive deleted] wreath I've ever seen, so I said, "Maybe you should sew." She said she didn't know anything about sewing, so I found her a class to go to. She does all of her sewing for our store now. I would say that 80% of the stuff that is sewn out there is from her.

KS: Like the little zipper pouches?

CF: Yes, everything.

KS: Those are really nice.

CF: She does really good work. I was like, “Holy [expletive deleted], I’m glad I motivated you!” She went and took one class and started making stuff, but she wasn’t really sure what to make. I told her to look at things that she would want to carry, or think of something that you have and put your own twist on it and how you want to make it.

At “Spark and Hustle” Tori Johnson said, “You don’t have to re-invent the wheel – you just have to make it your own.” That’s all you have to do. Obviously if it’s a good idea, then you should probably make the [expletive deleted] thing, and just put your own twist on it.

TAM: Her friend who sews will sends things up here and asks us what we think. She once sent us a business card holder that would hold about three business cards. It was a great idea, but you might want to put a few more in there. It was just too narrow. You don’t want to carry 3 or 4 cards; you want to carry 25 or 30. So, she bounces things off of us. The other day I told her that I have a little wristlet but I said that my phone didn’t fit in it, so I told her I would like for her to make one that was a little bigger.

CF: So she’s working on them. She didn’t think it was going to work. And she didn’t know what to tell people when they asked her what she did. She was afraid they would just think that she sat at home all day or something because her husband works in the oil field and I said, “No, this is totally going to work. If you think it’s not going to work, then it’s not going to work.”

Anyway, she’s been working for about six months now and has already picked up another store that carries her items there in her town and her Etsy site. We push her items all the time, but her Etsy site has done really well and she does custom, too. I hate it when I can’t find custom stuff. Every time customers say anything about the quality, I always text her and tell her. We’re trying to motivate her the way we wish somebody had done with us.

TAM: She’s by herself, too.

CF: She lives by herself in a 5<sup>th</sup> wheel trailer in an oilfield.

TAM: With Chelsea and me working together, I told that when I’m over here by myself all the time and she’s getting all the emails and I don’t hear how much people love this or that, that



sometimes I get to the point where I don't even want to do this anymore because you're not hearing the feedback. You need to be in an environment that feeds you, not just by yourself. If Chelsea's friend is making stuff and she's not hearing anything, then she gets down on herself. She does really good work and I post about the items when she sends things in. Like, "Heading out with my new clutch!" – to keep her motivated because she is by herself and it's hard to stay motivated when you're by yourself.

CF: You need cheerleaders.

KS: Everybody needs cheerleaders, but I think you're right with what you said earlier about reinventing the wheel. I think a lot of entrepreneurs see it that way. I think they see what everybody else is doing and they think...

CF: That's an inventor.

KS: ...they have to come up with something that nobody's ever seen before. I listened to a lecture by a man named Mark Ventresca, and it was about entrepreneurship and how entrepreneurship isn't crazy inventions that nobody's ever seen before; it's a combination of ideas and technology that already exist. It's just combining it in a different way to make it stand out in a different way. It's the same thing; it's just a different combination.

CF: Definitely. And a lot of the stuff that I do – like these pendants – anybody can buy them. It's not that nobody else does it, it's that we have a style that we try and put in our stuff, so that things all go together. So, we have items that are completely original, like the wraps, and then we have some items that are not, but it all goes together. Especially with our retailers, they want to carry it all together. If they can buy it from somebody else, that's fine, but they buy it from us and it goes together with our packaging and everything.

TAM: We're not trying to catch the world, we're trying to catch that niche of people that is like us, or our style, and who want to be like us.

KS: What do you think is more important?

TAM: Not trying to please everyone in the world, because you won't.

KS: And you have to be ok with that.

TAM: Exactly.

KS: In your personal opinion, do you think that anyone can become an entrepreneur? Do you think entrepreneurs are born or made?

CF: I think it's a combination. Like I was saying about supermodels – not everyone needs to be a supermodel. Just because you're pretty doesn't mean you need to do it. I definitely think it has a lot to do with how you're raised only because of the fact that I know so many people who could never do this, and I know so many people who have failed, because they can't. They second-guess everything or they can't stick with something. It's a combination of things. I think it depends on your amount of determination and knowing how to use your resources. You have to be able to figure it out on your own and not have to have a team of 50 people. Then you're not even making any money because all you're doing is trying to have a whole team of people around you that are doing everything for you.

KS: You two didn't have someone holding your hand and leading you through all this. You did it by yourselves.

CF: Yes.

TAM: We dove right in.

CF: I literally could not think of anything else that I wanted to wake up every day and do. I just wanted to make jewelry. They were going to pay me to make jewelry. I did not want to go to engineering school – not at all. I was totally the only girl, too. It wasn't going to be fun at all. To me this was going happen because I had no idea what the [expletive deleted] I was going to do if it didn't work. So, we made it work.

TAM: We jumped in and we just figured it out. We didn't know how it was all going to work, but we were just going to figure it out when we got there. We wing it.

CF: We are totally gut-winging it. I totally don't like to commit to things crazy in advance. You have no idea what could be happening – no.

KS: In a year you might be paralyzed...

TAM: That's right.

CF: You just never know.

KS: We sort of talked about my personality traits question. In the future, where do you see this company going? What is the big picture that you have planned for HorseFeathers?

TAM: Chelsea doesn't know. [Laughs]

CF: I hope that we grow enough that we are in retailers all over the world – even more than we are in right now. I would like to be in a lot more small boutiques and things like that. We've gone back and forth about having other locations. I don't know how many people have asked us about franchising. Everyone wants to be us! We're totally not franchising, but we would possibly want to open another location in Lexington or somewhere like that.

TAM: Me doing retail is scary for me because I know we're here and we have control of all of this stuff, but when you do something like that then you trust someone else to be your face and run it like you want it to be run. I've been in retail enough to know that it's hard to find that person because it's not theirs. When they go home at night they don't care as long as their paycheck is still coming. It's even hard to find somebody to work that cares close to the amount that you do, much less cares enough to run a whole store in another area. You can't be there every day.

CF: I want our website to be busier. It's steady busy right now, but I feel like I can handle it. I want it to get to a point where I can't handle it and I need somebody else.

TAM: Then we'll figure that one out.

CF: We'll figure out who that person is at that point. I feel like we could grow a lot more.

KS: I liked what you said yesterday about the big picture. You said you wanted to encourage people to be themselves, but to also step out of their comfort zone.

CF: Yes.

KS: I think I see that in one of your big picture things. You want people to not be afraid to be different.

CF: Yeah.

KS: You want people to really express themselves. I like that.

CF: We should have done a “before and after” of how Granny used to dress versus how she dresses now.

TAM: She’s 85 years old.

CF: She’s rocking it.

TAM: She will have on some color and t-shirts.

CF: She wears all these bracelets – the really bright, funky ones. So, we’re doing well. She was so set in her ways on how colors go together and stuff.

KS: Hopefully there won’t be any yellow pants.

CF: Hopefully we are getting people to be a little more fun. We actually have a lot of girls that we know that always dressed in sweatpants and what not. They come in here looking cute as [expletive deleted] now. They’re posting pictures on Instagram saying, “You’re making me be cute.” It’s good because we’re making people feel better about themselves, which is really good, too, because we have a lot of regular customers that are stay-at-home moms or something like that. The girl that does our logo, she sits at a computer all day so she doesn’t care and she never cared when she came out. Now every time she comes in here she’s got little wedges on and it’s like she’s trying to dress cuter.

KS: I believe this business is definitely very inspiring in that aspect.

CF: We try to be inspiring.

TAM: We hope so. I’ve always been like that, too. I never really cared.

CF: Let me tell you how much neon I wore at the trial – [expletive deleted]! We fight over who gets to get which colorful stuff when we’re out shopping. We both have mint –no, we have mint and purple – and then we’re like, “Well, you got that color, so I’m getting this color. We fight over who gets what color.

TAM: When she was little she had neon bows and neon shirts and shoes.

CF: Bows on top of my head, by the way.

TAM: I made those for her when she was a little cheerleader. She had a whole bowl full of bows. Her [motioning to Chelsea] dad was coming in one time with the ship into the Bahamas and I was there and she wasn't, but I was dressed in my neon and they were like, "Oh, there is Ray's wife. We can see her glowing before we get there."

KS: I love your photography. I think that it really sets off all of your pieces, because then you see how the whole picture fits together.

CF: Yes.

TAM: Uh huh.

KS: I think then you don't just see it as a necklace or a bracelet or whatever – you see it as a whole.

CF: One thing we've started doing is working with a professional photographer. We gave her a ton of our jewelry and if her seniors use it, then they get a gift certificate to use here. So we have a variety of girls' pictures on our website, too, which I think is really good because then you don't think you have to be an 80 pound blond to wear this. Then it puts off more that you can be any age. She has a girl that's in her 40's that's got a tattoo sleeve that's going to be modeling for us. I think that is awesome. We're so punk because we're working the tattooed chick on our website. You just have to have the personality and mindset that you can be different and be able to wear our stuff. We're not for boring office people.

TAM: Like the headbands I wear. I usually have a wrap on, too, but I've been working so much I haven't had it on. All the stuff that I wear people will say that they're too old for it and I'm thinking, "What makes you too old for this?" People have such a stereotype of what is age appropriate. Why can't you do that? What stops you from doing it?

KS: They stop themselves.

CF: That's because they're worried about what people are going to think if they see them. They're worried about other people's opinion all the time.

TAM: She doesn't really like my headbands with flowers on them but I don't give [expletive deleted].

CF: I just don't like the headbands with flowers on them – at all.

TAM: I have people coming in, and they're like, "Oh, those are cute! We could get that for so-and-so's little girl" and I'm like, "Or you could wear it." They were thinking I was too old for that.

KS: When was the moment that you stood back and you looked at your company and said, "Oh, this is big"?

TAM: Just about every day when she puts us in some other event.

KS: Well, when was the first moment?

TAM: Going to the Oscars, I think.

CF: Yeah. Well, the Oscars in combination with our Fox News Interview. We did a live interview.

TAM: It wasn't with a person.

CF: It was a satellite interview. They were interviewing us from Washington and we were in LA.

TAM: We talked to a girl on the phone.

CF: They weren't even in LA. They just had a satellite office there. It was just crazy. We were like, "What's happening?"

TAM: We talked to her about four times and she asked if she could talk to both of us, so she called and we got on speaker phone in front of the window because that was the only place where we could get a signal and we talked to her just like we're talking right now. So, then when we showed up there we were looking around as we were going back, and the guy said that the

person that was interviewing us was in Washington. I was like, “So, we’re not talking to her?” and he’s like, “No, you’re talking to that camera over there with that sticky note on it.”

CF: We were supposed to look at a sticky note that had a smiley face on it and that was where we were supposed to look the whole time.

TAM: And we had a 15, 20, or 30 second delay in our ear from what we were hearing to what we were saying, and Chelsea was like, “Where’s the trashcan? I think I’m going to throw up.”

CF: That poor guy.

TAM: First I think they thought, “Oh [expletive deleted], what have we gotten ourselves into?” but by the time we left, they were laughing with us and joking around.

CF: They let us watch clips of the interview. It was entertaining.

TAM: Chelsea was sitting in a wheelie chair to do the interview.

CF: Who puts you in a spinning chair for a live interview?

TAM: She was moving back and forth the whole time.

CF: We already thought we had lost our minds because we were going to fly to LA. And then the day after our long day of hanging out with celebrities we got to go on live, national television.

TAM: We could not figure out what we were going to talk about to Fox News.

CF: It was just so bizarre.

TAM: They were talking about Obama, and we were sitting in the back watching it before we went on and we were like, “Yep, here’s Obama.” Then HorseFeathers went on in a minute. They wanted to know the behind the scenes on the Oscars.

CF: They also wanted to know how we got from Kentucky. I was like, “Please don’t ask me anything political. I don’t know [expletive deleted] about the government or anything.”

KS: This was all strung together, though. You found out about the Oscars and then...

CF: It was within a week.

KS: You went to the Oscars and then Fox News wanted to be behind the scenes. So you were on Fox News, too.

CF: One of the girls that works in the office at Fox News is a Facebook fan of ours. She saw our post that we were going to the Oscars, and so she told the main girl there that they needed to do a story on us. So, Facebook helped us once again.

TAM: The girl in the office said that she buys stuff from us. We get the most random invitations. When OK Magazine featured us, it was one of the girls in that office that told her boss to call us.

KS: I remember when you got in that.

TAM: And it was just because somebody that happened to be buying from us said, "Why don't you check these people out?" So they call us to do it. We were in Nashville and we happened to have our iPad with us. So we were trying to sit in the car and get this thing going because it was 11:00 and we had to have it to them by 3:00. It was crazy. One thing leads to another and we jump on it.

KS: You just have to jump on it and it goes from there. Well, those were all the questions I had.



## Appendix “E” – Case Study Outline

**Case introduction: Dialog style introduction of Chelsea’s conversation with her husband when she decided that she just wanted to make jewelry instead of going to engineering school.**

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### **Tammy – Co-Owner of HorseFeathers Gifts**

- Family life and influence
  - Her dad was a farmer (self-employed)
  - Her mom was a stay-at-home mother
  - Did not have early aspirations of becoming an entrepreneur.
    - Family influenced her to pick a job and move on
    - A job was simply a means to pay the bills
    - No emphasis on bettering oneself
    - College was neither common nor necessary
    - Her goal was \$8 an hour.
  - Her brother grew up and went straight into farming
  
- After High School she spent much time with photography and art
  - She wanted to go to school for photography, but did not want to take additional classes “just to take pictures”
  - She opted to take Kodak and other photography seminars to improve her photography
  - She does not have a college degree and never took any business courses
    - Has lots of first-hand experience with small businesses
  - Spent time with photography on the side
    - This was before digital was in existence

- Marriage and family
    - She got married to Chelsea's dad
      - Many in Chelsea's dad's family chose nursing as the only viable option
        - His family influenced him to pick a job and then move on
        - A job was simply a means to pay the bills
      - He was in the police force in Kentucky
      - He joined the military
        - The military job gave his wife, Tammy, and Chelsea many opportunities to travel and see new ways of doing things
          - During this time they lived in Kentucky, Nebraska, Spain, Mississippi, Rhode Island, and Virginia
        - Tammy found work wherever they ended up
          - In Spain she did some photography for pay
  - Tammy wanted a better life and education for Chelsea than she had
    - She wanted to break the pattern that her family was living
  - Tammy worked for several small companies
    - She always worked in offices, not in boutique-type shops
    - These companies were often husband and wife teams and her experiences were not good
  - Who Tammy is:
    - A go-getter
    - Someone who brings Chelsea back to earth when she needs it
    - Someone who dislikes middlemen – she likes to get to the root of the situation
      - A top reason why she likes small businesses
    - Someone who enjoys working with customers
    - Someone who doubted her ability to own her own business because of her age
-

## **Chelsea – The creator and owner of HorseFeathers Gifts**

- Tammy bought Chelsea Pony Beads to make jewelry as a child
    - Chelsea always loved making jewelry
    - Chelsea’s love of jewelry continued throughout her growing up years
  
  - In 2004, while Chelsea was still in High School, she got a job at Beads Etc. in Omaha, Nebraska
    - This was a jewelry store where she loved to shop
    - This was the first time she was paid to do what she loved, which was making jewelry
    - She worked this job until 2007
  
  - After Chelsea’s graduation Tammy and Chelsea moved from Nebraska to Kentucky
- 

## **THE JOB BEFORE HORSEFEATHERS**

- After moving to Kentucky, Chelsea received a job at a small, locally owned company called Preferred Tank & Tower Inc. The company works on water tanks and communication towers.
  - Tammy started in 2008 as Project Manager
  - Chelsea started in the summer of 2009 as Inspection Manager
  - Neither of them ever worked for a large company
    - They worked at places where they could talk to the person in charge
    - They always worked in offices, never in boutique-type shops
  - Added to both of their small business knowledge
    - They had no formal business education, but lots of first-hand experiences with small businesses
    - They learned more about what not to do than what to do

- They grew with the business
  - When Chelsea was the Inspection Manager at Preferred Tank and Tower, she...
    - Communicated with people all over the world
    - Was comfortable no matter who she was talking to (on the phone or in person) and talked to them like a friend
    - Constantly looked for new ideas for the company and ways to make them more efficient
    - Genuinely wanted to help them out
    - Was very efficient in her work
- 

## **HORSEFEATHERS ON ETSY**

- Around the same time when Chelsea was beginning her new job (in the middle of 2009), Chelsea decided to bring some of her jewelry to the retail environment by opening up an online store on Etsy, which is a place to both buy and sell handmade items such as jewelry and clothing
  - She heard about Etsy on Good Morning America and decided to give it a try
  - She came up with the name “HorseFeathers” because she needed a business name to open the Etsy shop
    - Creative names make people wonder what the shop is and sticks in their minds
  - They had occasional HorseFeathers sales at this time, but mostly they sold Lampwork glass bead jewelry
    - On Etsy it was very easy for customers to leave the HorseFeathers store
    - People also wanted to haggle prices
    - Some on Etsy started to copy their designs
  - At this time Etsy did not have guides to help people create successful Etsy businesses
  - Chelsea did not seek council about creating this mini business because she is not a fan of other people’s input
    - She is heart-centered

- Later in 2009 Chelsea quit her position as project manager at Preferred Tank and Tower to start engineering school at Ivy Tech Community College in Evansville, IN
    - Chelsea applied, was accepted, and a few days before classes were starting she sat with her husband to look at what she could expect to find in an engineering program
    - She had a slight meltdown because it just was not what she wanted in life
    - She decided that she just wanted to make jewelry
    - She had no idea what else she would do if her jewelry business did not work, so she was determined right then and there to make it work
  
  - Chelsea soon left that school to attend the Gemological Institute of America to receive a jewelers education
    - Classes were taken entirely online
    - She took classes in the thing that she was interested in pursuing
    - She was already selling jewelry on Etsy part-time
  
  - After Chelsea decided that she just wanted to make jewelry full-time, her very next step was to make a bunch of jewelry and find local jewelry shows where she could sell it in addition to selling jewelry on Etsy
    - This was a difficult step because they had not been in the area for long
    - She looked specifically for higher-end artsy shows to set themselves apart from potholders and painted Santa Clauses
    - She found these shows from Google because they were new in the area
-

## **STUDIO 107 – MORGANFIELD, KY**

Not long after Chelsea resolved to start her own jewelry business she found out about Studio 107 in Morganfield, KY from a friend of her mother's which had the potential of giving her a place to sell her items in an actual store (2010)

- Who worked there?
  - A photographer
  - An artist
  - Chelsea was to make jewelry and allow them to sell it for her
  
- What did Chelsea do there?
  - Soon after she moved in plans changed and she had her own room to make jewelry, a place to sell it, and an opportunity to teach kids art
  
- What was Chelsea's experience there?
  - She enjoyed having three creative people in one space
  - She also enjoyed Karrie. Karrie is a friend and they worked well with each other
  
- Why did she decide to leave this studio?
  - It was not good for retail
    - People knew it was a studio, but they did not really know that it was a shop
    - It had poor visibility
  - They had begun to talk about how to rearrange and do new things with the store, but the photographer had a disagreement with the artist and decided to move to another building
  - There were some hard feelings from the artist because Chelsea decided to leave, but she wanted to have a store and have it grow
  
- How did she learn about her new building?

- The photographer told Chelsea about a building close-by that had a superior storefront, so Chelsea left Studio 107 and moved to a new building down the street.
- 

## **STEPPING PAST ETSY**

- Soon Chelsea was ready to take HorseFeathers to bigger and better things
    - She continued to maintain the Etsy shop
    - Chelsea's goal for the business was to help women everywhere be unique and express their own personality in the accessories that they wear
    - Facebook continued to boost sales and awareness of the new website
  - Chelsea was at Studio 107 for about 6 months
- 

## **HORSEFEATHERS – MORGANFIELD, KY**

They moved HorseFeathers to a building across the way from Studio 107 in Morganfield, KY (2011)

- The focus of this move
  - To have an optimal retail space that allowed the business to be visible and accessible to customers
  - To have sufficient space for assembling jewelry and putting together shipments
  - It was during this time that HorseFeathers really became their own
- Changes and struggles
  - Tammy left Preferred Tank & Tower, her former job, and started working even more with HorseFeathers
    - Chelsea and Tammy became business partners
  - Not everyone was supportive of this effort

- Some people have even made comments about them not really working and that their business is not a real job.
  - Resources were scarce because they did not qualify for grants and were unwilling to take out loans
  - “How to” instruction for entrepreneurs were scarce in their area
- 

### **FACEBOOK – 1<sup>st</sup> Appearance**

- During this time, HorseFeathers Gifts joined Facebook (2011)
    - Facebook was an excellent tool for HorseFeathers
      - It informed
      - Allowed customer and business owner interaction
      - Advertised
      - Encouraged “buzz” marketing
    - Chelsea handles all of the social media work for the business
- 

### **HORSEFEATHERGIFTS.COM – 1<sup>ST</sup> Appearance**

Chelsea soon felt that HorseFeathers had a need for its own website so that it could have a complete online appearance (2011)

- Chelsea had no training in web design, but designed the website by looking at other websites that she liked and then looking to find out who designed their site.
  - She started with a basic one that was about \$150 for a template (then \$12.95 per month for hosting)
  - Then she worked up from there as the business grew and she needed more functions
- Chelsea looked at how other businesses created their online business and then she thought of how to make hers better and make it stand out more



- Chelsea taught herself how to build her online business through research of her own
    - She used Google and looked at other sites and blogs for ideas and guidance
    - She learned both what to do and not to do using this method
  
  - They have several bigger companies that they watch to see what they do with their business
    - Alex and Ani, LLC is a jewelry business based in Rhode Island
      - Alex and Ani is eco-friendly and charitable, too
      - HorseFeathers is passionate about these things as well, so they are watching this company for possible guidance and ideas.
      - They want to do it their own way, though – with their own spin
  
  - Chelsea wanted to learn how to use Photoshop for use on the website, so she Googled it and ended up finding a site called GIMP, which she uses to edit their photos for free
    - GIMP is an acronym for GNU Image Manipulation Program
    - It is a freely distributed program for such tasks as photo retouching, image composition and image authoring
    - She learned how to use GIMP by using YouTube videos
  
  - The photography of their products stands out because they are not on black or white backgrounds
    - Products are featured on individuals or on antique items like books or wood
  
  - The official website looks more professional than the Etsy site
    - People take them more seriously
    - They can show their business' true personality here (business culture)
      - Their website makes a joke when it messes up
        - Instead of saying “Error” it says “Whoops, our bad.”
-

- They found a logo that they loved so that there would be no need to change it or the fonts they use with it (on the website, business cards, etc.)
  - They say this helps them with brand recognition
  - They even stamp it on the pieces of jewelry that they can
  - The logo was designed and drawn by a photographer friend of theirs
  
- Now they had more space and Tammy started perfecting the silver stamping and created the silk wraps
  
- They were doing more and more shows and people were becoming more aware of them
  
- They had about 2000 Facebook fans at the time (they have over 30,000 fans in the present day)
  
- The most difficult part of startup for them was making risky decisions
  - It was difficult to sign a year-long lease when they did not know what was going to happen to them
    - Even if the business tanked they would still have to pay their bills
  - It was difficult to decide to expand
    - They had to decide whether they wanted to play it safe because they were doing well or whether they wanted to take a chance at being even bigger and better
    - Chelsea says growth is about taking chances. When one person says, “Well, what if it doesn’t work?” Chelsea says, “Well what if it does?!”
  
- The benefits that HorseFeathers got from Facebook site that they opened in 2010:
  - Chelsea used Facebook to sell products
    - She would post pictures and links and items would start selling
  - They encourage customer involvement by having people enter contests to win free jewelry or to have the chance to have their design featured in the store

- The benefit of the website:
  - This is when the website started to pick up because they had their OWN website and did not have to rely on shows or Etsy or the store to sell items
    - They could now sell at any time and anywhere
  
- The benefits that HorseFeathers got from doing more and more jewelry shows:
  - Chelsea took the initiative to find ways of getting the business out there
    - She does not fear rejection
  - Around this time people started contacting them about selling wholesale
  - They got a lot of their wholesale opportunities from the shows that they attended
    - Wholesale provides big income for the company
    - Each order is often between \$500-\$900 and the other sales were hit or miss
  
- All of the business' boons came with a price: copycats. To combat copying, they worked with a local designer to hand draw the pictures and sayings for their metal stamps. They do not buy pre-made stamps for their jewelry.
  - Competition motivates Chelsea to come up with even more great ideas
  - People were buying supplies from the same vendors (such as the same silks for the silk wraps) and then copying both their silks and the names that they used for them
  - Chelsea uses this copying to keep the jewelry fresh and exciting, so that copycats would have much to keep up with
    - They change their product line as others copy their designs
      - That is why shoppers can seldom find the same pieces twice.
    - This keeps them coming back looking for new items to add to their collection
  
- They know they did not reinvent the wheel, but they did make the wheel their very own

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## LEGAL ISSUES – MORGANFIELD, KY

- As is typical the business had legal issues
- Chelsea said that this part of the business is something they probably should have learned in school, or at least taken some classes in it
- Taxes, Tax ID numbers, LLC's, and wholesale numbers are things that they did not do correctly in the beginning, so it caused them problems later
  1. Got wrong tax ID number
  2. Got another tax ID number
  3. Did an LLC, but didn't use exact same information, so it came up as them have TWO LLC's instead of just one
  4. When filing taxes it became complicated because you are supposed to file only under one
- They said that the legal mess started when they started allowing people to pay with PayPal, because once you bring in more than \$10,000 they send you a notification
- Tammy said that if you don't know what you're doing then you would get into the mess that they did. They said that it was chaotic trying to get everything worked out
- Tammy said that part of the problem was that an accountant friend of theirs filed online for them, but she only filed under one tax number and so the government thought they were trying to get out of paying taxes and sent them collection notices. So they ended up paying their taxes twice to get them out of their hair until the accountant could get it all worked out and get it to where they have the business listed under one LLC with one tax ID number

- They highly recommend that small businesses hire a professional for this aspect of the business. Chelsea said, “This is not a DIY.” At the time she said that she would just deal with it later
  - They think it would have been a good idea for them to get legal advice when they first started the business
  - Chelsea said they would have been interested in programs that are designed to help entrepreneurs with difficult parts of running a business like taxes and business licensing, but they did not have anything available in their area. Neither Morganfield nor Henderson have much to offer to budding entrepreneurs. They said they would be interested in finding similar programs online, but that they had not looked into anything like that thus far
  - They have found that a lawyer would be useful in their business, because they often get emails from people wanting to sue them for reasons like copyright infringement
- 

- A chance to take a bigger step (Morganfield, KY)
  - Location – location – location. Location is key. This building flooded frequently. They needed not only to be visible to customers, but to also have a sound structure
  - They talked to a friend who owned a floral and gift shop in the other half of the building about how to do wholesale stuff, because she has wholesale experience
  - Their friend gave them advice about wholesale and told them if they would sell her all the stuff in their store, then she would take over their lease and let them just walk away and focus on wholesale
  - They had about 2 weeks to leave the building

- People came into the store and offered to buy most of their stuff, so they left with hardly anything
- Their friend bought most of the furniture-type displays that they had. This furniture was the painted/scuffed furniture that Tammy was also doing on the side at home. People like it, but they don't want that to be the focus and think it would only be worthwhile to do for custom orders
- Plans for the future
  - Morganfield is very small and boring town, so there was not much potential for them there. They planned to move to their houses and focus on wholesale and the website sales
  - They felt like they tried to grow too quickly and things got chaotic – they were having to drive a long distance to work, get supplies, make the jewelry, travel and do shows, and keep up with their wholesale vendors
  - Luckily they never struggled with having customers
  - They still did not want to hire anyone
- They were in this building about 7 months

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## **HORSEFEATHERS – TAMMY'S AND CHELSEA'S HOMES**

They moved HorseFeathers from Morganfield, KY to working out of both Tammy's and Chelsea's homes (2012)

- The focus of this business move:
  - To obtain more wholesale vendors and increase website sales
- This step for the business was chaotic because it was difficult to keep everything straight when the business was split into two locations

- In addition to designing the website, social media page, etc. Chelsea designed all of the marketing pieces (billboards, newspaper ads, etc.) herself, so that the business' personality was throughout each piece.
  - She will only use certain mediums if they will allow her to design the pieces herself
  - Newspaper ads are easy to get, but not as effective. Their opportunity to be on a billboard came because Tammy's cousin has a billboard and he used his connections to get them a board as well
  - She has been asked many times to design black and white ads. Black and white will never be effective for a jewelry store
  - She learned how to design such things by using Google and watching YouTube videos
  - She likes the way that Tiffany and Co. designs their billboards because they are clean, crisp and to the point, so she modeled the HorseFeathers ones after theirs
  
- Chelsea used her time on Facebook wisely. She paid attention to both those who become fans of her page or of business' pages that show up nearby
  - That is how she found Tiffany, a freelance writer located in California
    - This girl now writes all of their website material
    - She has also used her connections to give HorseFeathers more media opportunities, such as their interview with Martha Stewart where Chelsea was featured as one of Martha's "Doers of the Week" in December 2012
    - Because the work is freelance, Chelsea does not have to worry about keeping someone on staff to do the writing for the business (she does not feel that she has the skill to do it herself)
  - This is also how HorseFeathers got to participate in the 84<sup>th</sup> Oscar Academy Awards Talent Suite on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2012.
    - Chelsea met a girl named April through one of HorseFeather's giveaways who lives in California and who has had much experience with celebrity gifting. April owns a body-care business called Shea Chic in San Diego, California.

- She put in a good word for them with those who run the Oscars and they were invited to participate
    - The Oscars Talent Suite is an event where up-and-coming entrepreneurs can display their wares and abilities to celebrities. Celebrities need an invitation to participate.
    - This was a big deal for them. They had to travel far and they weren't really sure what to expect from the whole experience. They felt very out of their element mingling with celebrities like that
    - Overall, though, that evening allowed them to have a degree of business exposure that they never would have had otherwise.
  - On February 26, 2012 Fox News interviewed them. Here they were asked about the business and their experience and the Oscars Talent Suite
    - One of the women that works in the office at Fox is a fan of HorseFeathers and saw that they had posted that they had been at the talent suite, so she told her bosses that they needed to interview them
    - It was a satellite interview because the interviewer was in Washington and Chelsea and Tammy were still in LA
    - Once again Facebook helped them with their business
- Quality and heart-centered work is important to them, which is why they decided not to pursue a slot on the TV show Shark Tank. Shark Tank is a TV series where entrepreneurs pitch their business ideas to a panel of self-made millionaires and billionaires. The point of the reality show is to secure one of the panel members as an investor, so that you too can make your business and yourself big. It's a way to get money for business growth. Investors on Shark Tank will also offer businesses the opportunity to sell their business on the spot for \$50,000 (estimate) and then just walk away from it.
  - Their logic behind not being on Shark Tank was that their jewelry is just jewelry and that the investors would see that. The two of them is what makes their jewelry valuable. If they sell the business or lose a lot of the control of it, then the jewelry would just be lumped into the pile of all the other items of jewelry and it would go nowhere.



- It is important to them that they maintain control of the business at all times
  - They did not want their business to be outsourced, which is a big component to what Shark Tank investors will require chosen businesses to do.
    - Quality in a high priority
  - They wanted minimal employees, but if one of these investors invests in your business then they become a business partner and take part in the business decisions
    - Chelsea's philosophy is that no one is going to care as much about her business as she is
  - Their goal never was and never will be to make a bigger paycheck
    - The business exists because it is their passion
- With entrepreneurship one key to success is seizing opportunities. Chelsea understands the importance of seizing an opportunity. When she finds an opportunity to be featured in a magazine or other article, she moves quickly to inform them and to display her work, so that there is little to no lag time in between.
    - When Green Living Magazine wanted to feature them and their eco-friendly silk wraps, they needed samples of their work the very next day, so Chelsea immediately overnighted samples to them
      - Chelsea says that being impulsive and taking initiative is very important to running your own business
    - After they went to the Spark and Hustle business conference, Chelsea emailed Tory Johnson with Good Morning America and got an opportunity to have HorseFeathers jewelry featured on Deals and Steals
    - They were also featured in OK! Magazine through a seized opportunity
    - Chelsea saw every opportunity as a "maybe" until they finally said either "no" or "yes"
      - She is very persistent in her efforts
  - The online sales and the wholesale sales built up so much that once again they realized they needed...

- A bigger location
  - A location together
- 

## **HORSEFEATHERS – HENDERSON, KY**

They moved HorseFeathers to downtown Henderson, KY, which is their current location (April 2013)

- The focus of this business move
  - To have more studio space to work in
  - To have space up front for people to pick up their custom orders
- How they found this new location
  - A little over a year after they started doing their business at home they decided to go out in a “blizzard” to look at buildings to rent downtown
  - When they went into the one they are in now, they saw it had a turquoise ceiling and they fell in love
- There were some key issues and things to think about for them when they took this step:
  1. They CLOSED the other store for a year, so people might be confused when they OPENED it again
  2. There was a risk because the online store had taken off and the new store would require new work and have new challenges
  3. They had never had a business loan and they never intended to have one, so the store would require a huge investment
  4. They had to sign a yearlong lease, so even if nothing sold they would still have to pay rent. If things got REALLY bad they figured they could just have a massive sale to pay the rent
  5. Since they started in April, they missed key holidays like Christmas and Valentines Day. A Mother’s Day special for custom stamping and other designs was still an option

6. Because the business was risky, they did not feel comfortable hiring someone to help them
  7. Their risk would increase in they invested all of their business in one location. They chose to maintain their website, their Etsy site, their bricks and mortar store, and their jewelry shows
- On the first day that they opened they had someone contact them via Facebook and ask if they could have a private party in the studio to make bracelets
    - The studio part was not fully set up because they had spent so much time on the front of the business
    - They ended up putting up folding tables and getting it all together for that group
    - They got a lot of buzz marketing from that endeavor
      - Word-of-mouth marketing is excellent for their business
      - They try to make everyone feel a friendly connection with themselves and the business, so that its positive vibe is spread to all who hear about it
      - This is the best marketing that they have ever had
  - They wanted to make sure they gave customers multiple reasons to shop with them – this makes their brand more reputable. It also displays their business as serious and set apart from all the other “Mom and Pop” shops and craft show
    - Green Business Bureau – Platinum Members
      - They have the recognition on the outside the store
    - They also feel strongly about supporting local economies
    - They put a lot of emphasis on being themselves instead of putting forth a formal business appearance
      - People like it when they experience real people in a real business
      - Customers like a relationship with the companies that they buy from
      - That’s true customer loyalty
    - They think that most people buy from them because they like them. They believe that people’s connection with themselves prompts them to buy, buy often, and tell others. They want to be themselves at all times, and it appears that customers like that

- The store ended up being busy all the time, so they hired someone to work the front while they worked in the back
    - They intended to sell only enough up front to pay the rent on the building
- 

**Present day:**

- HorseFeathers still does well on Etsy
- Silk wraps are their #1 seller
- There are stores all over the world that they sell their items in...
  - The United Kingdom, France, South Africa, Canada, Ireland, and Istanbul
- They do not wish to franchise, but they do hope to open more locations nearby
  - They fear that in retail that their items would not be represented like they want them to be
  - It is hard to find people that really care to work for them

## Who is Chelsea Farmer?

- A go-getter
- Persistent
- Passionate
- A self-learner
- Self-motivated
- Impulsive
- Forward-thinking
- Driven
- Always ready to act
- Adventurous
- A chance-taker
- A risk-lover
- An early riser
- A driving force
- Someone who does not like to delegate her work
- Someone who is not afraid to just wing it
- Someone who knows how to figure things out
- Someone who doesn't burn out because she likes what she does
- Someone who is motivated, not crippled, by competition
- Someone who doesn't like to be limited in her work
- Someone who does not fear rejection
- Someone who never strove for a fat paycheck when she created the business
- Someone who strives to be herself at all times
- Someone who knows how to make decisions
- Someone who knew very well that she did not want to work a 9-5 for the rest of her life
- Someone who can go-go-go and enjoy it
- Someone who can reach goals
- Someone who can get things to where they need to be
- Someone who doesn't need anyone's validation of her plans or goals

- Someone who dislikes middlemen – she likes to get to the root of the situation
- Open and honest with her opinion

## Appendix “F” – “How to Write a Case Study”

See reference (“How to write,” 2012)