

How This 17 Year Old Turned a Love of Watches Into a \$13,500 a Month Business

For years I've been advocating for people to start their own online stores.

I love helping entrepreneurs create value seemingly out of thin air and have been fortunate to mentor a few students on their ecommerce journeys.

One of my most successful students is Jonah, a 17-year-old competitive swimmer from Denver, Colorado.

Jonah was like many other people I've met.

He wanted to start an online business, but he didn't know how to code or have any experience doing it.

So how did he go from knowing nothing about ecommerce, to making more than \$13,500/month in revenue in his first year of business?

Check out my interview with him below to find out.

How did you get your start in online marketing?

I've worked a few part-time jobs and never enjoyed working for other people. I like working on my own time and I'm happy to put the effort I need into things, knowing there is a reason and reward for what I'm doing.

I had tried affiliate marketing and it didn't turn out the way I wanted. One day it hit me, "Why don't I make my own store and start selling a product I care about instead of working really hard to sell stuff on other people's store?"

My first ecommerce store, Watch Outfitters was launched with Shopify on January 2nd, 2016. I had absolutely no experience selling things online and had to put in a lot of time to get started.

Note: You must be 18 years or older to start a Shopify store. If you're under the age of 18, your parents can start one on your behalf.

I watched webinars, followed the Shopify blog, followed YouTube tutorials, and I also asked specific questions to people in the Kingpinning and Shopify Strategy groups on Facebook when I got stuck.

It took me a little while to learn how to ask the right questions. For example, I didn't just ask, "How do you set up a Facebook ad?" I'd ask, "I'm setting up a new ad campaign and am looking to do some split testing—how do I know which segments to test?"

How did you decide what you would sell?

Since it was my first time selling something online, I wanted to choose a product line that I knew something about and that I had a personal interest in.

There are a lot of jewelers in my family and I personally love watches, so I decided to launch my own store based on my hobby and knowledge of watches.

Growing up I saw how different retailers would charge crazy amounts of money for watches of a similar style and quality that were a quarter of the cost.

I curated my selection for people who want a high-quality watch at an affordable price and

Comment [Office1]: This is relatable with me as I like to be in full control of my life.

Comment [Office2]: I can have my parents make an account for me if this is the method of marketing/advertising I would like to pursue.

Comment [Office3]: Think outside of the box in order to get a more detailed answer based on what one actually wants to know.

Comment [Office4]: I must think about my skillset or something I have passion in and pursue it.

decided to sell some popular brands as well as design and test a few of my own custom products.

How did you get your first sale?

Things started off slow and for the first few weeks I had mostly \$0 in sales days, which was extremely de-motivating. At one point I even called you (Bryan) up and admitted that this wasn't working out for me.

While we were talking I had an Aha moment and this is when my store went from selling \$0 a day to \$300-400 a day in product.

The mind shift happened when I stopped focusing on "selling things" and started to ask, "how can I add value to my customer?"

I began to focus on what my customer wanted and then provided specific copy and imagery that spoke to those wants.

My ads changed, my store changed, and I realized that I am not a master of my customer, but instead I'm a servant who must learn from my customer's behavior.

Comment [Office5]: It is not always about the money. It is many times important to build a strong basis with the customer in order to spread word of the business.

Comment [Office6]: In the future, I could possibly have surveys I could give to customers and ask how their experience went or how to improve it.

What's one of the best avenues you've found to grow your sales?

Knowing your customers equals testing.

Facebook Ads has been by far one the biggest growth drivers for my business.

Shopify has a great post on how to get started with Facebook Ads for ecommerce which helped me understand my customers and how to target the right groups effectively

I've tested a lot of different ad campaigns, from targeting people's birthdays, to targeting ads based on specific brands they've liked. Most recently I've been testing ad targeting based on different interests people have and have been offering ads with different products for different demographics.

In the end there are four steps I took in order to maximize my Facebook Ad performance.

Comment [Office7]: New method to test out ads.

Step 1 - Set Up Facebook's Tracking Pixel

If you're using Facebook Ads you have to set up this step to track which of your ads are working and which ones are not. Sign into Facebook and go to your ad account. Click on the Ads Manager tab and under assets you can find your tracking pixel and copy the long number.

Once you've copied the Pixel ID log into Shopify and paste it into the Preferences tab within your Online Store Settings.

With this set up you can start tracking your ad traffic from Facebook and Instagram to know which ad groups are performing best for you.

Note: You can follow these steps to add the Facebook pixel to your Shopify store.

Comment [Office8]: Method of sampling for the best possible ad.

Step 2 - Find Great Product Photos and Write Enticing Ad Copy

Without great product photos it can be hard to get users to click on your ads. I found that my most successful ads had high-quality images and some message that speaks to my customer's wants.

Comment [Office9]: First impressions are very important.

At first I thought my ads should be telling users to buy a watch now, but these ads don't add value to my customer.

My ad copy later changed to say things like, "Ready to step up your watch game?" which spoke to my clients desire to have a nice watch to wear for a night out on the town.

Step 3 - Create Groups of Ad Campaigns

When I first started with Facebook Ad Campaigns I was nervous to invest my own money. With some guidance I learned how to reduce my risk and maximize my profit with these steps.

By creating 3-5 Ad Campaigns in Facebook, I'd experiment with targeting different groups of people by age, location, interests and then experiment with which creative and offers worked best for each group.

Each ad campaign was evaluated when it reached a specific amount of spend, in my case, \$25, and later \$75. Below you can see two different campaigns with their cost and total purchase next to them.

The first campaign cost about \$30, but made me \$262 in revenue. The second campaign cost \$75, but I only made \$76 in revenue.

Comparing these costs, I'd then remove any ads that did not convert into enough revenue after a week.

Comment [Office10]: Make sure to get the ideal return.

Step 4 - Rinse and Repeat

Every week, I'd continue the process of removing my poor performing ad campaigns and then duplicating the best campaigns to see if I could get higher conversions with new ad creative or copy.

It's critical to constantly test new ads and make sure you are not spending more on your ads than the revenue you are receiving from them.

Outside of Facebook Ads, are there other ways you've grown your store?

A few other areas I've found to be impactful are email marketing and providing social validation for my store.

I use the Mailchimp Popup Subscription to ask visitors for their email address when they arrive to the site. By providing a special offer, like 10% off a purchase, I found my signups drastically improved.

Comment [Office11]: New methods of advertising I had not thought of before.

After I collected email addresses for a month I'd send a "Watch of the Week" (WoW) email special, which now generates about \$500 in sales with each email.

I also really like the Recent Sales Notifications app which tells visitors when someone else has placed an order. These small pop-ups show something like, "John Smith from New York City, NY just purchased this watch" with a picture and link to the watch.

This helps direct visitors to recommended and popular products on the site, and speeds up the turnaround time on the shopping experience.

After the purchase, the Coopt App allows my customers to share my website to their friends on

Facebook for a small discount. I set it up to send an automated email offer after every purchase, asking them to “Help us fit the world with Watches” and include a 5% cash back reward. Since my customers typically have friends with similar interests and demographics, this “social shoutout” is a great way to generate high quality traffic.

Any advice you have to other first time ecommerce entrepreneurs?

At the end of the day you have to put in the work and will get out whatever you put in. It took me 6 days to get my first sale and once it hit everything became real. All the energy I had put into the business was coming back to me. I said to myself, “I’m finally making money online.”

Comment [Office12]: Work as hard as possible then look for results.