

Cancer Patient Turns Handcraft Hobby Into 6-Figure Business

Cancer is a crushing and life-altering experience that led one mother, after being unable to speak, to leave her job in sales to create a 6-figure online business.

Istanbul, Mar 6, 2019 (IssueWire.com) - This is no small feat for a two-person team, consisting of Zeynep Prens and her brother, Yusuf, who handcraft their whole leather product line. Working under the brand, [Galen Leather](#), from their humble workshop in Istanbul, the duo makes leather notebook covers, pen cases, MacBook cases, iPad sleeves and travel accessories. They ship thousands of their loyal customers all over the world.

Following the devastating diagnosis of a rare type of head and neck cancer (Adenoid Cystic Carcinoma) back in 2012, Zeynep was forced to consider alternatives to her successful career in sales. Doctors warned the cancer treatment may leave her incapable of speech. Following a painful four months of treatment, their prognosis became reality. It completely turned her family's life upside down.

Zeynep says, "Without the ability to speak, I was no longer able to speak with customers and make sales. My career was over. This forced me to look for a new job model that would allow me to work without speech."

Motivated to provide a brighter future for her son, Zeynep came up with the idea of selling locally produced leather goods and vintage kilims online. This business model enabled her to communicate to customers solely via email. She was able to make a name for herself, turning an obstacle into an opportunity. Fortunately after a year, Zeynep's speech returned but by this point, she was steadfast on her new entrepreneurial path and knew the business needed something more to succeed.

She brought her brother Yusuf onboard who had recently graduated and disinterested in pursuing a traditional 9-5 job. It wasn't long until a new obstacle spurred them to consider another interesting business opportunity.

Zeynep explains, "One day my husband asked for a leather journal for his Moleskine notebook and iPad. When I requested this from our vendor, he was not interested in helping and I knew we had to make some changes. Yusuf and I decided to start producing our own leather goods. We started taking classes to learn leather crafting, learning from some of the best leather crafters in the area, as well as YouTube videos. It took several tries to create exactly what my husband had been looking for but we finally managed it, much to his satisfaction."

From here, the duo started designing their own line of products and rebranded to Galen Leather. The challenges, however, didn't stop there. In 2016, PayPal stopped their services in Turkey. This forced them to look for alternative sales channels to Etsy and eBay that didn't rely on this one payment gateway. They decided to simply create their own online store through the Shopify platform.

Business really took off during the 2017 Christmas season when they designed a [wooden writing box](#) which sold over 1000 pieces. As they continued to tweak and refine their e-commerce strategies, their online store experienced a 55% increase in conversions and a 138% increase in revenue over the following year. Since launching on Shopify, they've created over \$1 million worth of product from their very own hands.

They attribute their success primarily to one word – focus. They learned from other successful e-commerce stores to narrow their audience down to 2-3 focused communities, like stationary lovers, pen

collectors and travellers. By understanding their specific audience better, they've been able to better service them.

Zeynep comments, "A lot of people ask us about why we don't have distributors, wholesalers or physical stores. I explain how we prefer to reach our customers directly who love to know they are buying from us firsthand. This enables us to offer affordable prices, more options and customisations. In return, we receive quick feedback about product improvements and have more control over our brand to maintain integrity within the community. It's a formula that's worked well for us."

Operating in the competitive online retail environment is challenging enough, even for the big players. Galen Leather, however, have showcased their own competitive advantages as a small enterprise. This includes their ability to rapidly adapt to external forces in the marketplace and leverage them to their benefit and niche down to a focused audience. With thanks to platforms like Shopify, it's clear there's still room for small, family-run businesses like Galen Leather to thrive.

To find out more visit <https://www.galenleather.com>

About Galen Leather

Galen Leather handcraft leather notebook covers, pen cases, MacBook cases, iPad sleeves, and travel accessories to inspire you on your adventures and in your creative pursuits. Designed and handmade in Turkey, our products add a touch of luxury to your travels and provide the guarantee of a long-lasting accomplice you can trust to last the test of time while on the road.

Contact details

Issued by: Galen Leather

Contact: Zeynep Prens

Email: zeynep@galenleather.com

Media Contact

Galen Leather

zeynep@galenleather.com

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