

E-commerce platform boosts design entrepreneurs

BY LAMEEZ OMARJEE

Hello Pretty is an online marketplace for design entrepreneurs and is the brainchild of husband and wife team Scott Hadfield (chief technology officer) and Sam Marx (creative director). This platform allows local designers to create and manage their own online stores and social media presence from one central place.

Originally, the founders noticed a gap in the market: buyers had limited access to the “awesome design being created in South Africa”, apart from the local hipster market, says Lee Geldenhuys, head of strategy and social. “With Hello Pretty, we wanted to empower small South African design-related businesses and give them a way to connect with both local and international markets.”

Hello Pretty manages the web development, payment gateways and invoicing for designers. “Designers often

have to fill every role within their business themselves; we try to help lighten that load,” says Geldenhuys.

Designers can focus on engaging with communities and making wares. They have their own branding and social media links on their store pages and they have analytics they can activate on their stores with support and guidance from the Hello Pretty team.

There are two selling plans. The Starter Plan has no monthly fees and 20% commission on sales. The Standard Plan is R90 per month with 5% commission on sales. Interested designers can apply to be hosted on the site, whereafter Hello Pretty will confirm the quality of products and photos, ensuring they’re not “unaltered imports”, says Geldenhuys. “We’ve tried to have as few barriers to entry as possible without compromising on quality.” Qualifying designers join for free.

Since being launched in 2012, the “small team” consisting of web designer Marx, developer Hadfield and copywriter Adeline Levescot, has grown the business to support over 1 200 designers. Some products include e-books, consultations, photography packages and workshop tickets.

“Anyone who designs and creates can sell on Hello Pretty,” says Geldenhuys. The website boasts a 10% monthly growth on turnover, she says.

One of the designers, Katie Marx, set up her business Haute and Tidy eight months ago. She uses Hello Pretty for selling, has a website and a presence on Facebook, which drives customers to order from the online store. She chose Hello Pretty because of its “longevity”. “They have outlasted a number of other companies who were offering the same sort of service,” she says.

Haute and Tidy and its customers have benefitted from the support offered and the new features that keep being added to the site. Joining Hello Pretty has resulted in greater marketing opportunities and brand exposure, with interest from various customers and businesses. The credit card payment option is also more convenient for her customers and they trust it far more than EFTs. “They [Hello Pretty] have a far bigger following than any of us smaller businesses could create without a lot of time and money.” She plans to join the platforms of competitors Takealot and We Heart This in future.

Geldenhuys says that the e-commerce landscape is dynamic and changes quickly so it is difficult to set future goals. “Whatever we come up with now may be irrelevant by the time we get there.” For now, they plan to redirect their income to educational ventures and marketing. ■

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From left to right: Lee Geldenhuys, Sam Marx, Adeline Levescot and Scott Hadfield