

Making Up Self Employment

*David Temkin is the Founder & CEO of The SoLa Look, a makeup line launched in December 2013 that targets the growing Latina and Spanish-speaking population. David was born and raised in Boston, MA and graduated from Umass-Amherst with a BA in Business Administration. He went on to earn his MA from Emerson College in Media Arts. He joined the NASE in 2012 and finds the **NASE Member Directory** of other NASE businesses one of the most valuable member benefits.*





What inspired you to enter the field you are in?

We saw there was a void in the makeup industry of a brand that specifically targeted, appealed and marketed to Latinas. Coupling that with my passion for customer service, retail, marketing and learning about different cultures, The SoLa Look was born. It is also satisfying to have a business that provides a product that many women use to make themselves feel more beautiful.

When and where did you start your business?

I launched The SoLa Look in December 2013. While I live and work in the Boston area, we provide a brand of makeup to a segment of the population in the whole country, online sales allow us to not be limited by geography. You can also find me traveling to Florida, New York and other places spreading our brand.

Speaking of online sales, how do you market your business?

We have a presence on social media networks including **Instagram**, **Facebook** and **Twitter**. We promote all of our current products, sales and news on these channels. They're all great platforms where we can speak to our customers and potential customers. When we release a new product we also send out an e-mail to everyone who signs up for our newsletter.

Most importantly, we use influencers on **YouTube** and Instagram to promote our products. They have dedicated fan bases that we're able to tap into for free.

Sounds like you have had some great success, what challenges have you faced in your business?

One big challenge has been to keep up with the demand for our makeup. Because we're a smaller company right now we're unable to keep a large amount of inventory. We have learned to overcome this by giving ourselves proper lead-

time. It's hard to forecast sales because there are so many variables that go into it (such as receiving a popular review on YouTube, thus severely spiking sales that week). We also use an app where customers can leave their e-mail address to receive an automated message when the product they want to purchase comes back in stock.

Another challenge has been to make sure sales are steady and/or growing even if our products are not being promoted or reviewed by influencers on a certain day or week. We have tried to remedy this problem by spreading out our delivery of promotional lipsticks to the influencers. We used to send them packages at almost all the same time but now we know when to send what to whom.

That seems like a lot of work, do you have any employees?

Currently I am the only employee. However, I have a good friend, Yvette Camilo, who is a long time makeup artist and worked at Sephora. She helps out quite a bit with deciding on the makeup products, formulas and shades that we release. She's an expert in her field and an invaluable asset. She's also Dominican and fluent in Spanish. In the future I'd like to bring Yvette on full-time and also hire another person to solely be in charge of our social media presence.

You must keep pretty busy, what is your schedule like, what's a typical day for you?

My schedule varies each day but the constants are: packaging and shipping orders to our customers, checking inventory levels, responding to e-mails, chatting with YouTube and Instagram influencers, updating and maintaining our social network pages and brainstorming future products. Because of how the makeup industry works it's important to plan ahead at least 6-8 months (at the minimum) before releasing a new product.



Can you walk me through fulfilling an order?

We typically ship orders within two days of receiving them. Once we get an order, it is picked (grabbed out of storage) and packaged. We use stamps.com and a Dymo label writer as our postage software, it saves both time and money. Once the order is shipped we will then e-mail the customer their tracking number.

What's the best thing about being self-employed?

At my previous job I was given almost no time off, employing myself allows me to be able to attend events that my daughter is involved in. Being in charge of my own schedule and mixing personal and work commitments has been very enjoyable thus far.

That does seem enjoyable, what's the most important piece of advice you would give to someone looking to start their own business?

The most important piece of advice would be to follow your own path. There is not one universal way of achieving success in business. If there were, everybody would be doing it. Choose your own path and learn from your mistakes and your successes. What works for one person may not work for you. Be creative and be determined.



Learn More in the NASE Small Business Locator

Learn more about David Temkin, The SoLa Look, and other Self Employed businesses in the **NASE Small Business Locator directory**. You can add your own company to the NASE Small Business Locator in up to three categories at no charge – it is a free benefit to NASE members.