

Cody Schoeni - Kings Customs

Background:

In 2018, I saw an ad for shoe paint while I was just scrolling through Instagram. Little did I know that ad was going to be the start of something big. I've always enjoyed art and have always loved shoes. So I said to myself, "I'm going to try this!" After thinking about it the next day, I went online and ordered some paint and bought some brushes and began practicing. As months of practice went by, I began getting better and people started to ask me to do shoes for them. Since then I've made multiple social media accounts and have had shoes shipped to me from various different states.

Overview:

Kings Customs is a shoe customizing business. I hand paint each one of my shoes using a variety of tools such as paintbrushes and airbrushes. I offer a variety of designs that basically allows the customer to get what they want. It may be a favorite character from a cartoon, a favorite sports team, or even a simple colorway. Whatever their imagination comes up with, consider it done. My goal is to allow my clients to get a pair of shoes that are unique to them and helps them be different. Many people love standing out and that's what I allow people to do. My clients love the feeling of getting a custom 1 of 1 shoe that only they have. It gives them a sense of uniqueness.

My main target is the youth due to the immense sneaker culture there is today. I promote most of my business through social media profiles such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. My most grown page is my Instagram account with 2000 followers. This is where I do the most promoting and branding. Many people direct message me right on Instagram where we work out the design and costs of the service. I offer various online payment methods such as PayPal, Venmo, and Cashapp. Also if they are close, I will personally meet up with them to do business.

Personal Qualities:

I make my business succeed by being a hard-worker and staying motivated. Being a student-athlete takes up the majority of my day. Sometimes running this business can be difficult, especially when I have homework, practice, and 2 or 3 games a week. Although I still make it work. I work around my schedule and find any hours I have available to paint. Whether it's on the weekends, an hour after school or a day where I don't have much going on. At times this can be hard, but as I said I pride myself on being a hard-worker and staying motivated. I also love getting involved in the community. During the summer of 2019, I was asked to donate a pair of shoes to the UNLESS cancer benefit Baseball game between the Menasha Macs and the Appleton Legends. I gladly painted a pair of shoes and donated them to the charity game, where they were then auctioned off and the money was donated to the cancer charity.

A particular struggle I went through was moving houses. Last year my family packed up

and moved to a new house. This took a lot of time and much of my focus was on packing and getting ready to make the switch. Although my equipment was the last thing I packed up due to wanting to work on shoes as long as I could before having to pack up, I still had to take a break at some point in order to move. When we arrived at our new home, the work was not finished. We still had tons of unpacking to do and I needed to find a space to start working again! I told my father I needed a space to work and he cleaned up a spot for me in the garage. It wasn't the most ideal spot but, it got me back to work. Eventually I began organizing a bit, making it neater. This became my new work space, I was back in business! I overcame this struggle with the help of my family. Although it doesn't stop there. After summer passed and we were settled into our home, my dad offered to build me a workshop, but only if I'd help. So we did exactly that. He and I spent countless hours walling up our third stall in our garage. We insulated, drywalled, and then had a heating and cooling system put in. We then had it plastered by a professional and then we painted it. We also added a snap down floor. In short, with the help of my father I went from a small section of work space when moving in, and barely having any time to work because of moving to having a brand new workshop where I can continue to work hard in.

When thinking about my successes, I always recall when I was asked to do an interview with the Post-Crescent (Appleton-Fox cities). I sat down with Shane Nyman, a reporter for the news company. About a month later, I had an article written all about what I do and my successes. Although it didn't stop there. A day after my article came out, USA Today published an article called, *Around the Nation, News from every state*. Every state had a small section of news and under Wisconsin, my name and business can be found.

Another thing I am proud of is the clients I have been able to work with. I have worked with many different people including friends and family, high school athletes across many different states, college athletes, famous rappers, and NBA players. During the summer of 2018, I reached out to a former high school athlete at Oshkosh North, Tyrese Haliburton. I knew Haliburton was going to Iowa State to play college basketball. I saw this as a chance to get some recognition and move my art into the college sports world. Since then I have done 5 pairs for him and hope to continue to work with him as he makes his way into the NBA. Last year around Christmas, I had the chance to do two pairs of shoes for a former Milwaukee Bucks player and current Detroit Piston, Thon Maker. I talked to Maker over social media which he then directed me to their equipment manager. I talked with the manager and was able to do two pairs of shoes for Maker.

Lastly, I had the opportunity to do a pair of shoes for a famous rapper, Lil Mosey. After painting his shoes they ended up on his Instagram where there was a video of him wearing them while dancing.

Finally, my most recent success is getting a sponsorship. A lace company called Love your Laces has recently reached out to me and offered me a sponsorship. Although this

is not a paid sponsorship, I do get a discount off of their products as well as some free products. It was a humbling experience when they reached out to me and asked if I would promote their laces on my shoes.

The Future:

I am just beginning to work on building my own website. I hope to launch that website sometime during March. My hopes are that this website helps bring in more clients that will boost the money coming in. This extra money can be spent to invest in my business such as buying shoes that I can pre-make and put up for sale on my website. I plan to keep growing my social media by continuing to post quality and professional content, the more support the better. In terms of market share, I want to continue to improve and build my percentage of it. I look to build my market share by putting out unique artwork rather than following the same designs that everyone else is doing. Basically, I want to stand out and provide a shoe that one can only get from me. I also intend to keep expanding my product range. This is endless, I have designed many pairs of shoes of many brands and models. I have yet to come across a shoe I couldn't do anything to. Therefore, I hope to find more and more models to paint so everyone has an option to get the shoe they like. As far as employment goes, I am not interested in hiring anyone because my work is unique to me as an artist, therefore, I would like to pursue painting shoes myself.