PODCAST SCRIPT | SIDE HUSTLE SCHOOL

Scented Santa Letters Bring the Holly Jolly Sweet Smell of Success

A branding expert writes herself a whole new career one personalized letter at a time.

By Leanne Beattie · Story: 817 words

> *"Sometimes you don't need a completely original idea… you just need to put your own spin on something that works."*

Alejandra Gomez was a dedicated Side Hustle School listener when she came across an episode about a woman who created Santa letters. Alejandra had been looking for a way to raise money to buy Christmas gifts for underprivileged children and thought a Santa letter business was a great way to do this.

< 2 wks	< $100	1,000	$17K
from idea to launch	in startup costs	letters sold in 2020, up from 32 in 2018	earned in 3 weeks in 2020

A fresh spin on a proven idea

As any good side hustler knows, research is essential. Alejandra dug in and found a huge gap in the market… nobody was doing scented Santa letters. Since memory is closely tied to our sense of smell, Alejandra wondered how she could connect her Santa letters with a scent to create positive memories that would last a lifetime. She wrote a storyline that made it all work — Santa writes his letters in the kitchen while Mrs. Claus bakes. Then Alejandra came up with a secret way to make her letters smell like cookies, and a successful side hustle was born!

But now it was early November and Alejandra knew if she wanted to sell Christmas letters that year, she'd need to do it before Thanksgiving. It was time to get started! She went to the craft store and bought envelopes, paper, wax for the seals, and some pre-made Christmas stamps.

But her creativity didn't stop there. She added in a bit of faux snow to each letter. Then added prints of reindeer hooves on the envelope, which Alejandra addressed by hand in modern calligraphy. She typed up the first letter and created her prototype.

Up and running in under two weeks

As a branding expert, Alejandra knew the importance of having an effective website. She hunkered down and created a complete Squarespace website in only two days. She took all the photos in her living room with her iPhone using red poster board as the background. And she wrote the content herself.

North Pole Postal was up and running in less than two weeks for under a hundred dollars.

Spreading the word

Her friends fell in love with the personalized Santa letters and became her first customers when Alejandra shared them on her Instagram. Then her local Houston TV news channel covered her business in a Christmas segment and more orders came in.

But Alejandra knew it would take more than that to make North Pole Postal a long-term success.

She made a list of Instagram influencers she thought would be a good fit for the business and emailed them explaining what she did and her mission to help children in need. As compensation, she sent the influencers free personalized Santa letters for their kids. The influencers then shared photos of the letters on their own Instagram accounts and the word spread.

Instagram continues to be a crucial part of her success, but Alejandra also has an email list and gets subscribers through her website.

Growing pains

North Pole Postal has grown significantly every year since 2018. The business has gone from selling 32 letters that first year to selling one thousand letters in 2020. Although the season is only about 6 weeks long, in 2020 the business made $17,000 in 3 weeks!

Because it's a seasonal business with a tight timeline, Alejandra has struggled a bit with her success… creating a thousand personalized letters and handwriting each address on the envelope is hard work! To lighten the load, she's started taking orders earlier in the year but still can't always keep up with production. She's sold out of letters the past two years because she reached capacity. Her body can only do so much! She's considering adding more staff soon so she can offer more letters.

Expanding the brand

North Pole Postal has expanded its product line and now offers unique seasonal items including Christmas-themed clothing for the whole family. And next year they'll be launching a candle collection that Alejandra hopes to sell through a major retailer.

The business also offers Santa letters in Spanish. Alejandra is Mexican-born and moved to the United States as a little girl. She's very attached to her roots and speaks Spanish at home. Christmas is a very emotionally rich family time, and she wants others to enjoy the Santa letter experience without a language barrier.

Right now, North Pole Postal letters are only available in the United States but will soon be available in Mexico and Canada.

Alejandra admits that the logistics of growing so much year over year have been difficult. There's been a steep learning curve where she's had to master everything from figuring out price increases and shipping costs to finding a manufacturer for the clothing line.

But the growing pains are worth it. This side hustle is on its way to becoming Alejandra's full-time job within the next year. And she wants to grow the business into a full brand that includes a children's book based on her North Pole Postal storyline. She'd love to work as an elf all year round!

WORDS OF WISDOM

Start before you feel ready

A good business idea doesn't have to take a long time to get started. North Pole Postal was up and running in less than 2 weeks and it's on track to change Alejandra's entire career and life.

FUN FACT

Why we leave cookies for Santa

Leaving a treat out for Santa began during the Great Depression in the 1930s as a way to teach children about giving. It was also a sign of appreciation for the gifts children received while America was struggling economically.

Source: History.com