Couple’s Side Hustle Surpassed $1,000 a Day Fast — With ChatGPT’s Help

Key Takeaways

- The Platts run Jam Packd as a side hustle to this day, and it’s on track for $400,000 to $500,000 in its first year.
- Here’s how the husband and wife team harnessed their professional skill sets to take the business to the next level.

This Side Hustle Spotlight Q&A features Michelle Platt, 51, and Brian Platt, 53, the married co-founders of Jam Packd, the business behind functional, protein-packed fruit spreads. The couple is based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Responses have been edited for length and clarity.



Image Credit: Courtesy of Jam Packd. Michelle and Brian Platt.

Want to read more stories like this? *Subscribe to* Money Makers*, our free newsletter packed with creative side hustle ideas and successful strategies. Sign up here.*

What was your day job or primary occupation when you started your side hustle?

Michelle: I ran a health and wellness website for over nine years and now work full-time as a campus director for a private school.

Brian: I've been an advertising creative for 30 years, working as a creative director, and now actively freelance while building Jam Packd.

Related: These 31-Year-Old Best Friends Started a Side Hustle to Solve a Workout Struggle — And It's On Track to Hit $10

Million Annual Revenue This Year

When did you start your side hustle, and where did you find the inspiration for it?

Michelle: We first came up with the idea in April 2024. I had just returned from a conference where I spoke to online entrepreneurs about how to utilize the Amazon Influencer Program and other outreach strategies. My favorite topic to write about on my website was health foods and products. Many of these were low in net carbs, high in protein and had good-for-you ingredients. By the time I left that conference, I was convinced that I should start my own brand in the health food niche. My husband and I brainstormed about products that could be more healthful, and it was an immediate aha moment when he suggested jam. While we always had jam in the house, it was something I increasingly avoided, with its empty calories and often artificial sweeteners and fruit juice. I knew I wasn't alone in this. We realized there was nothing out there that filled this gap in the market, and Jam Packd was born.

Related: His Salty Side Hustle Saw Revenue 'From Day 1' and Hit $10 Million Last Year



Image Credit: Courtesy of Jam Packd

Brian: In advertising, ageism is the one “ism” that’s alive and well and even somewhat celebrated. So at some point, I think every ad creative starts thinking about how else they can use their skills when the ad clock strikes midnight. For

me, that question turned into action when Michelle found inspiration at a conference she was speaking at. She came home with the idea that we should create something ourselves, and jam naturally rose out of that conversation. Our family consumes a lot of jam, but we've always done it somewhat begrudgingly, as even the "good" brands have always been too sweet for us, contained no real nutrients and were often loaded with sugar. So the idea of a spread packed with organic fruit, collagen peptides, prebiotic fiber, omega 3s, vitamins and minerals and no added sugar felt like something we would be hardcore consumers of. And if it was something we would love, maybe others would, too.

What were some of the first steps you took to get your side hustle off the ground? How much money/investment did it take to launch?

Michelle: It cost us about $20,000 even before our first bench test and purchasing ingredients. This included our initial setup and R&D, from setting up our website to our logo, lawyer fees, food scientist and focus groups. Our most important first steps were securing the domain name and our trademark, hiring a logo and product packaging designer (who nailed it) and connecting with a food scientist with experience in protein. (Our home recipes didn't have the right taste and consistency.) We also needed to find a co-packer that could handle our ingredient list.

Brian: Despite many people telling me the first thing you need is a business plan, the first thing I needed was a label. So we mocked up a placeholder label. As hideous as it was, it gave us something that felt tangible. We were no longer just a financial projections spreadsheet – we were a disgustingly ugly label. And that's something. We used that placeholder as a proof of concept, put it in front of paid focus groups and asked the question: "Would anyone even want this?" They did.

Next, we went to a food scientist to find out if making this jam was actually possible. It was. So we hired a designer, a

trademark attorney and brought the name Jam Packd and Jam Packed Jams LLC to life. The last (of the first steps) and most grueling was finding a co-packer, followed by reaching out to all the vendors and food groups. When you're the small guy, nobody wants to talk with you. In a moment of frustration, after having left a dozen polite voicemails for a fruit vendor, my final message was a full three-minute, expletive-laden rant. They immediately called me back, and we're still working together. So my advice is to be persistent and use naughty words on voicemails if you must.

Related: This Mom's Garage Side Hustle for Kids Became a Business With $1 Billion Revenue

Are there any free or paid resources that have been especially helpful for you in starting and running this business?
Michelle: For me, the best resources were my experiences as a blogger. When you have a website, you have to do it all: coding, plug-ins, social media, newsletters, influencer marketing, affiliate marketing, video and SEO. Brian brought his own set of expertise. Now working full-time, however, I knew we couldn't handle it all. We found some great freelancers on Fiverr to help with some of the technical tasks. And while you have to be cautious with AI, ChatGPT helped resolve Shopify issues, led us to the right apps and even provided some guidance on our business strategies.

Brian: I find the *Startup CPG*, *Shopify Masters* and *Prof G* podcasts very helpful and inspiring. But honestly, I feel I learn the most from entrepreneurs who have struggled or failed. Survivorship bias is real. The winners will say things like drop out of college or follow your instincts. To me, it often feels like random attribution. I'm sure there are lottery winners who advise on what to wear when buying a ticket. The entrepreneurs who have lost seem to know exactly why and can tell you how to avoid it.

If you could go back in your business journey and change one

process or approach, what would it be, and how do you wish you'd done it differently?

Michelle: There are so many things we wish we could change, but maybe the headaches were necessary. A third set of eyes could have helped. Even though Brian and I looked at things meticulously, we found some mistakes early on in our labels and had to redo those. Also, in an ideal world, we would have continued our relationship with our food scientist for longer before moving on.

Brian: Just one? That's tough. If I had to pick, I'd say we should have perfected our recipe before bringing in a co-packer. Our food scientists were amazing and loved experimenting with us, but co-packers aren't built for that. I wanted to brainstorm, tinker, talk and throw jam at the wall. They rightly wanted a ready-to-run recipe they could adapt slightly for their facility. We went in too early, and it was frustrating for everyone. In the end, we circled back to our scientists, and that's when things really clicked.

Related: This Mom's Creative Side Hustle Started As a Hobby With Less Than $100 — Then Grew Into a Business Averaging $570,000 a Month: 'It's Crazy'



Image Credit: Courtesy of Jam Packd

When it comes to this specific business, what is something you've found particularly challenging and/or surprising that people who get into this type of work should be prepared for, but likely aren't?

Michelle: There are so many moving parts, in everything from ordering ingredients to understanding your margins, that you have to be super organized to make this work. In all honesty, I'm not the numbers person, and had I started this business on my own, I know it would not have grown in the way that it did. Plus, it helps to have a veteran ad guy as my husband.

Brian: Few people will ever care about your thing like you do. That translates to a lot of lazy communication, ghosting and mistakes. Murphy's Law is in full effect. If the last ingredient you need to hit your production date is delayed, that's the week they ship it to the wrong address. When you send a purchase order, silence could mean they missed it, they saw it but don't prioritize you or, like in my case, they're waiting to see what their bigger clients order first, and you'll get what's left. Whether it's ingredients, printing or scheduling runs, expect about 10% of the passion and responsiveness you're putting in.

Can you recall a specific instance when something went very wrong? How did you fix it?

Brian: I sat down to write an ad about our "low net carbs" and wanted to double-check the numbers. I picked up a jar of blueberry and saw total carbs listed as four grams. But I knew that couldn't be right. The math didn't add up. We'd put everything through lab testing and double-checked everything, but somehow a typo made it onto thousands of labels. So Michelle and I printed new nutrition panel stickers, flew to the warehouse in Utah and painstakingly applied one to every jar of blueberry by hand.

How long did it take you to see consistent monthly revenue?

Michelle: We knew standing out as a new product would be hard, but honestly, Brian's experience in advertising did just that from day one. We sold out of our first run in about 30 days and were consistently making over $1,000 a day soon after.

Brian: Despite all my frustrations with Meta, its ad algorithm

is frighteningly good. Within a couple of weeks, we could see which messages resonated most.

What does growth and revenue look like now?
Brian: So far, we've passed $50,000 in sales and are on track to hit $400,000 to $500,000 in our first year through DTC. We've put a lot of focus on customer acquisition costs, and that's allowed us to stay profitable on our ads every single day.

Related: After College, She Spent $800 to Start a Side Hustle That Became a 'Monster' Business Making $35 Million a Year: 'I Set Intense Sales Targets'

What do you enjoy most about running this business?
Michelle: I've always wanted to be an entrepreneur. Both Brian and I are creatives at heart. It's what brought us together. It's amazing to build something out of nothing and have people appreciate your product.

Brian: The ability to publicly test our instincts. In advertising, if a brand's CMO thinks an idea sucks, it's dead. Now the public gets to decide. As it turns out, the ads that we have the most heart for often come back with the worst customer acquisition cost (CAC). So maybe all those CMOs I've cursed out over the years were on to something.



Image Credit: Courtesy of Jam Packd

Related: He Spent $36 to Start a Side Hustle. Now the Business Earns 6 Figures a Year — With Just 1-2 Hours of Work a Day: 'Freedom.'

What is your best piece of specific, actionable business advice?

Michelle: First impressions are everything, especially in this world of social media and scrolling. Get the logo and packaging right from the start. Create an enticing website. Pick a great name. And obviously make a great product.

Brian: I like the quote “only the paranoid survive” from Andrew Grove, the old CEO of Intel. There’s plenty to be paranoid about. We’ve already had someone try to trademark our name, and an early customer is now trying to make a knockoff, even stealing one of our core ad headlines.

But I actually don’t mean it to be so negative. I just mean if paranoia isn’t innate for you, build the habit of questioning everything. I don’t really believe in overthinking because questioning if you’re overthinking is part of the thinking itself — 99% of it won’t mean much, but the 1% that does makes all the calories burned worth it. You just won’t know what 1% mattered until later. After 30 years in advertising, I can tell you the team that wins is the one that thought, feared and dreamed harder than anyone else.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/starting-a-business/couple-used-chatgpt-to-start-side-hustle-on-track-for-500k/497476