Nurse's 'Very Grassroots' Side Hustle Grew to 8-Figure Revenue in 1 Year

Key Takeaways

- Harper started posting skincare tips on Instagram through her nurse practitioner lens in 2015.
- Word-of-mouth spread fast: Harper pre-sold thousands of units and hit eight-figure revenue in one year.

This Side Hustle Spotlight Q&A features Jordan Harper, 38, of Knoxville, Tennessee. Harper was working as a nurse practitioner, providing in-office aesthetic treatments for patients, when she started the side hustle that would become Barefaced, a multimillion-dollar skincare brand. Responses have been edited for length and clarity.

Image Credit: Courtesy of Barefaced. Jordan Harper.

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

I started posting skin tips and education on Instagram through my nurse practitioner lens in 2015. At first, I was not trying to create a brand: I simply wanted to share skincare education in a way that felt approachable and easy to understand and grow my patient base. What I discovered was that my patients were overwhelmed by all the noise in the skincare industry,

and I wanted to simplify things for them. That spark, combined with finding solutions to their challenges, turned into Barefaced, which I officially launched in 2020.

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?

The first steps were very grassroots: educating on Instagram, connecting with my patients and people through DMs and sharing routines that worked. I had no business background and didn't know anything about raising money, so *naturally* I took out five 0% interest credit cards and sent an online pre-order to my Instagram community to fund the first production order. Initially, my thought was to only sell products to patients in my office, but word-of-mouth spread quickly, and the pre-order sold thousands of units, so I knew I was on to something.

Image Credit: Courtesy of Barefaced

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Are there any free or paid resources that have been especially helpful for you in starting and running this business?

Community feedback has been my most valuable resource. Listening to what my patients and people were confused or struggling with surrounding their skin guided everything. On the practical side, when I couldn't afford to hire anyone, I leaned on Google and Upwork and was always looking for people to connect with who were more knowledgeable in the DTC space than I was. I can't imagine how much easier it would be now with ChatGPT. Over the past four years, we have been very intentional about shaping the brand story and the overall customer experience. Our community has always been at the center of what we do, and we constantly look for ways to serve

them better and create an exceptional journey every time they interact with us.

If you could go back in your business journey and change one process, what would it be, and how do you wish you'd done it differently?

If I could go back, I would have built out our C-suite earlier. In the beginning, every hire was a do-it-all person, which worked for a while, but it also meant we lacked the structure and management needed to scale efficiently. Two years ago, the business could have afforded senior leadership, and having that guidance sooner would have saved time, energy and growing pains. This year, we finally built out our C-suite, and having experts lead from different perspectives has been transformative. If I could do it differently, I would have made that move earlier to strengthen our processes and overall structure.

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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?

One of the most surprising challenges I faced once entering the beauty industry was realizing just how much brands rely on constant newness. Many release product after product to create hype and energy, and I quickly understood why: It drives momentum. At Barefaced, though, our philosophy is "less but better." We promise to deliver best-in-class, results-driven skincare without adding clutter or unnecessary steps, which means we launch fewer products than most.

The challenge, and what I think many founders aren't prepared for, is finding creative ways to curate experiences and build excitement that don't depend on endless launches or limited-

edition drops. It requires thinking differently about longevity: How do you keep customers engaged, supported and connected to your brand when you're not giving them something "new" every other month? That has pushed us to innovate not just in formulation, but in education, storytelling and customer experience.

Image Credit: Courtesy of Barefaced

Can you recall a specific instance when something went very wrong, and how you fixed it?

We once produced 50,000 units of eye patches, and when I received the final production run, they didn't meet our standards. They were supposed to be 0.4 millimeters thick, but they came in at one millimeter, and the tins we had chosen for packaging began chipping after just a few uses. A half millimeter may not sound like much, but those details are what separate good from great — and customers feel the difference. Technically, they were usable, and many brands might have moved forward, but they did not reflect Barefaced or our "best-in-class" promise. I made the decision to scrap them, which meant a $100,000 loss and a six-month delay in our launch. It was one of the hardest calls I've made, but protecting our integrity and maintaining customer trust mattered more than taking the easy way out.

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How long did it take you to see consistent monthly revenue? How much did the side hustle earn?

I saw consistent revenue from the very beginning, and I truly believe that was because I had been educating my community, both in office and online, for five years before launching Barefaced. By the time the first product came out, there was

already a strong, loyal customer base waiting for it. Within the first three months, it was clear this wasn't a side hustle; it was a real business. We finished our first year at eight figures in revenue, which confirmed the demand and gave me the confidence to keep building.

What does growth and revenue look like now?

Barefaced has continued to grow year over year and has grown into a nine-figure brand with a full team, a loyal community and an in-house R&D team. Growth is not only about revenue — it is also about the trust we have built as a reliable skincare resource.

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Image Credit: Courtesy of Barefaced

What do you enjoy most about running this business?

Seeing the transformation in people's confidence. We've been so fortunate that women are willing to share their personal stories with us because how you feel in your skin is so personal and vulnerable. It's not lost on me that they open up about this part of their lives. We've received thousands of before-and-afters over the years, but the ones that stay with me aren't just about skin — they're about confidence.

One that comes to mind is a mom who had always struggled with breakouts and redness. She told us she avoided photos and often felt like her skin kept her on the sidelines. She started using a Barefaced routine in the months leading up to her daughter's wedding, and afterward she sent us a message saying it was the first time in years she didn't think about her skin. Instead, she felt present, beautiful and confident celebrating her daughter.

That’s the impact that fuels me: not just improving skin, but giving women the freedom to fully show up in their own lives.

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

My best advice is to start building a community on social media as early as possible. Show your face, answer questions and share the messy middle of your journey. People don’t just buy products; they buy trust. The fastest way to build that trust is by showing up consistently, even if imperfectly. Social media is a free and powerful tool to grow a community, listen to what people actually want and test ideas in real time. If you do this well, by the time you’re ready to launch a product or service, you’ll already have a loyal customer base, and you may not even need outside funding.

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