

When It's Worth the Work

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November 1, 2018



How one man designed a path to success

We've all heard the adage: "Do what you love, and you'll never work a day in your life." It's a desirable goal but one few of us achieve. For Georgetown-based entrepreneur Cody Miles, loving his job in marketing didn't blind him to how demanding and labor-intensive working for someone else can be. During his tenure at a public relations agency in Dallas, he realized it was time to make a change. "Just about every day I was designing around five e-books. On top of that, I was building seven enterprise websites at the same time," Cody explains. "It was 80 hours a week nonstop. Naively, I said I could do this on my own and earn just as much money."

In 2015 that belief birthed Brandcave, a B2B (business to business) creative agency focused on user experience design for client websites, designing software applications, producing commercial videos, and converting website visitors into customers. Brandcave accomplishes these objectives through marketing practices such as user research, lead generation practices, and search engine optimization. Every client receives a customized approach because each has different needs and goals.

Brandcave performs a full audit of the client’s business before offering recommendations or a quote. The idea is to gain a thorough understanding of how the client operates to determine whether Brandcave is a good fit for the project. With the success of his business, Cody and his team are more selective about which clients and projects they take on. “I’m happy with that,” Cody says. “Because when we take a client on, it’s a partnership. When we finish a campaign and are seeing results, everybody’s happy.”

Cody says that doing his best work often required overcoming obstacles, such as getting clients to provide feedback in a timely manner and determining how to proceed once it was received. “We would send clients a proof—like a webpage mockup,” he recalls. “We would get a PDF sent back to us that was the webpage printed out with handwritten comments. We wouldn’t be able to understand it.”

Cody needed a software program for creatives that overcame those issues. Finding little satisfaction with available solutions, he created the Ashore application. During the concept validation stages of the program’s development, he learned from creative agency directors across Austin that they faced the same problems he had. “When I showed them the prototype for Ashore, they all said they wanted to use it,” Cody states.



Ashore is an online proofing program designed to expedite approval of proofs. Users upload the file—perhaps a document, video, image, webpage, or spreadsheet—to Ashore, choose recipients, and set permissions, workflows, and deadlines. Then they add a message and send the file off for approval.

Approvers don't need an Ashore account to review the file. They receive a unique hyperlink to an online dashboard. From the dashboard, approvers can view, edit, add and read comments, and decide whether to approve the file. Additional features allow users to reply and communicate with approvers, send new versions and reminder emails, and add notes to a timeline. Ashore automatically creates an audit log of each proof and notifies users which proofs are approved, overdue, or in need of attention.

"There's also an audit log, so you know how many versions of the file you've gone through," Cody says. "If you live an agency life like I do, you often charge for additional revisions. I can export a PDF of the audit log and justify my charges."

Though Ashore was designed with creatives such as writers, artists, designers, and other content creators in mind, Cody was surprised to discover that nearly half of Ashore's 800 users are print companies. This made sense when he considered how many proofs printers send out daily for approval. "They send out more than any one person at a creative agency would, though their needs are simpler," Cody says. "They need a yes or no on a file so they can start printing it and a way to keep track of their proofs. Ashore does that, and because it's \$12 a month, there aren't barriers to adoption."

Adoption is steadily growing, with Ashore boasting user accounts from companies such as AT&T, Uber, Costco, BuzzFeed, Ulta, Bloomingdale's, Steak 'n Shake, Girl Scouts of the USA, and Indiegogo. Cody says that as Ashore's popularity and success grow, Brandcave's focus is shifting in response. "Brandcave is transitioning into a software company for Ashore," Cody says. "We've worked with many software companies, seen their success, and what they did to get there. We've replicated many of those practices to make Ashore a success."



Some might wonder why Cody chose to set up shop in Georgetown instead of Austin or another mecca of commerce, but the answer is simple. As a Georgetown native, Cody wants to work where his heart and home are. It doesn't hurt that he also found the perfect office on the Square. "My office looks down into the mayor's. When I walk outside, I smell dough rising from the world's greatest pizza place," Cody says. "John Mueller's barbecue trailer is right around the corner from me. I'm blessed. Who could say no to this?"

Georgetown has proven to be a business-friendly environment, helping Cody and other business owners connect and grow their companies. The outpouring of support and help he's experienced solidified Cody's determination to keep his doors open right where he is now.

"This is home," Cody says. "We will never scale so large with so many employees that we'll outgrow this office. This is it. It doesn't get better. My wife and I love Georgetown. We're going to be here forever."

Forever doesn't sound so long when you love where you are and what you do, even if every day is unpredictable. From the beginnings at Brandcave, Cody came to work with a do-or-die attitude that continues to this day. As an entrepreneur, he acknowledges feeling a sense of urgency, a need to fight to survive and to produce the highest quality work possible, regardless of the client or current circumstances. His desire to thrive means that though he no longer works for someone else, his work week hasn't gotten any shorter. "I thought it would be less work," Cody says. "I've never worked so hard in my life, but I've also never had the opportunities that I have today."

Brandcave is a creative agency focused on helping businesses gain a competitive edge in marketing. Ashore is an online program designed to help expedite the digital file approval process. For more information about Brandcave, Ashore, Cody Miles, or his team, visit www.brandcave.co or ashoreapp.com.