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Women Who Design

Stacy Townsend

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Stacy Townsend with Sasha Maguire

Stacy Townsend*

Women Who Design

Bozeman, MT

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* *"Design is incredible and challenging – this intersection of talent, empathy, and creativity. It's everything I'm passionate about."*

WOMEN WHO DESIGN

BOZEMAN, MT.

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"I THINK THAT ACTUALLY BEING A WOMAN IS AN ADVANTAGE IN THIS FIELD, AT LEAST IN THE FREELANCE SPACE. I GET TO PICK MY CLIENTS, AND THAT MAKES IT FEEL REALLY DIFFERENT."

MEET STACY!



Stacy in her shop, Commonform

HOMETOWN

Yamika, Washington

EDUCATION

Attended community college in Yakima, WA

Transferred to the University of Washington, earning a degree in Graphic Design

CAREER PATH

Originally pursued a career in the medical field before discovering her passion for design

Inspired by a community of marble sculptors while working at a coffee shop

Explored fine arts (ceramics, metal smithing) before shifting to graphic design for its marketability

Founded her own design business after facing barriers in traditional agency roles

Current owner and founder of *Commonform Jewelery Studio*

STACY'S EPIC JOURNEY TO BECOMING A DESIGNER

CAN YOU SHARE THE JOURNEY THAT LED YOU TO BECOME A DESIGNER?

When you think about career paths, they often seem linear—four years of college, an internship, then a job. But for Stacy, a graphic designer in Bozeman, Montana, her journey was anything but conventional. As a nontraditional student, she meandered through various fields before finding her true passion in design. **"I originally thought I'd go into the medical field,"** she recalls. "I even pursued a dental career at one point because it seemed stable, but I wasn't passionate about it."

Stacy's moment of clarity came unexpectedly while working at a coffee shop near a shared artist studio in Seattle. The studio was filled with independent marble sculptors who would come in daily, covered in fine white dust. One day, curiosity got the best of her, and she struck up a conversation. **"They invited me over to their space, and I was just in awe.** I remember thinking, 'Wow, you really can do anything.' These artists had built careers around their passion, and that was a turning point for me."

Determined to pursue something creative yet marketable, Stacy transferred schools and majored in graphic design. Though it took her eight years to complete her degree, she now sees the value in taking her time. "Your journey in school doesn't have to be four years," she says. "Every step led me to where I am now."

"WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE A WOMAN DESIGNER IN BOZEMAN?"

As a female designer in Bozeman, Stacy has observed the challenges of working in a traditionally male-dominated field. "The patriarchy is alive and well in many industries," she says. She felt that more acutely when working corporate jobs. "There was always a ceiling." Despite facing rejection from design firms for being "unqualified," she launched her own business and quickly found success.

Owning her own business has given her more freedom to work on her own terms. "I get to choose my clients, and that gives me a level of control that I wouldn't have otherwise." Still, she acknowledges that earning respect in the field isn't always easy. Stacy also noted that while there are many female designers, breaking into leadership roles remains a challenge.

"THE PATRIARCHY WAS MORE PRESENT AND CHALLENGING FOR ME IN THE CORPORATE WORLD, WHERE I OFTEN REPORTED TO MALE BOSSES. NO MATTER WHAT I DID, THERE WAS ALWAYS A CEILING."



"I APPLIED FOR JOBS AT FIRMS, INCLUDING LOCALLY, AND WAS ESSENTIALLY REJECTED FOR BEING UNQUALIFIED. AND THEN I STARTED MY OWN COMPANY AND BECAME SUCCESSFUL."

THE IMPORTANCE IN SAYING YES

One theme that emerges in Stacy's career is her willingness to take on challenges. "People would ask me, 'Can you do this?' And I'd say, 'Sure!' even if I had no idea how to do it," she recalls. "That's how I got into web design. **A client trusted me to figure it out, and then it became one of the biggest parts of my business."**

This adaptability has allowed Stacy to thrive as a designer, proving that creativity isn't just about talent—it's about courage and curiosity. **"If you have the drive and curiosity, you can learn anything," she says. "That's been the theme of my whole career."**

From a chance encounter with marble sculptors to designing for some of Bozeman's most beloved brands, Stacy's story is a testament to the power of exploration, perseverance, and trusting in one's creative instincts.

CLIENT WORK

CALDERA CHOCOLATE

One of Stacy's most fulfilling projects has been branding Caldera Chocolate, a brand started by her friends Lauren and Logan. The collaboration grew organically, rooted in a creative partnership that spanned over the years.

"They're talented copywriters, and we had already worked on several projects together," Stacy says. "So when they started their chocolate company, they told me, 'You're the one we want to bring this brand to life.' It was a huge honor."



Caldera chocolate boxes in red



Caldera chocolate boxes in white

The packaging design process, however, wasn't straightforward. "It's always a bit of a chicken-or-egg situation," as Stacy put it. "Budget constraints and packaging limitations required us to pivot several times. We initially wanted glass jars, but they proved too clunky for shipping. Eventually, we moved to small, cube-shaped boxes—though even a three-quarter-inch size change made a big impact on the design."

Through projects like Caldera Chocolate, Stacy has cemented her philosophy that design is ultimately about service.



Peru chocolate with nibs



Caldera business cards



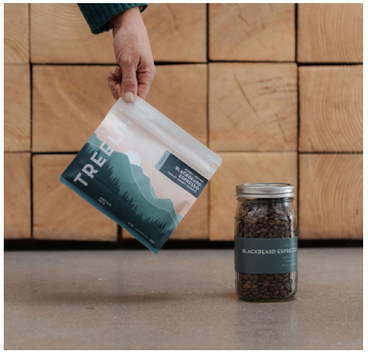
Nibs packaging

CLIENT WORK



Cruiser Decaf bag and beans

TREELINE COFFEE ROASTERS







Blackbeard Espresso packaging and photography, all done by Stacy





Treeline business cards



Coffee flavors lined up



—
Treeline founder Natalie holding coffee

“WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOUNG WOMEN ASPIRING TO PURSUE A CAREER IN DESIGN?”

“I guess one piece of advice I could share is just that there is a lot of different ways that can look. When I graduated, I thought that I had to work for an agency. I didn’t think that anyone would trust me unless I had some chops. Where do you get chops?

But it turns out none of my clients cared about that. They trusted me, and they cared that I listened to them. They felt safe sharing their ideas knowing they were being heard, but mostly they trusted in me to let their ideas would like come to life.

I think just trust that there’s a lot of ways to do it. And even if you’re like out and in it and feeling like it’s sticky and it’s not quite working, there’s always another way to do it.”

She also emphasized seeking out mentor ship. Finding other women in the industry and building a network of people who understand your experience makes a world of difference.

TRUST YOUR GUT.

TAKE UP SPACE.

> MY POINT OF VIEW ON DESIGN IS THAT THAT IT'S A TOOL TO HELP. I WANT TO SUPPORT THE NONPROFITS AND SMALL BUSINESSES IN THIS TOWN — IT'S JUST WHAT'S IN MY TOOL BELT TO HELP THEM GROW AND BE SUCCESSFUL.



Stacy and Sasha in a hallway outside her shop