



Hannah King

Tallahassee, Florida



Woven Futures

Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Hannah King:

Hannah King, Founder of Woven Futures, is leading the charge of the next generation of social entrepreneurs focused on creating 'social enterprises' that give back in more ways than one. King's "why" is unequivocally genuine and would inspire even the most diehard of misers to rethink what it means to give back. In our interview, King, who is currently a Junior at Florida State University, explained her "why" and where the idea came from to import all-natural artisan handcrafted bags, bracelets, dog collars and other goods from economically challenged areas to the United States.

I'm originally from Guatemala," she said. "My whole life growing up I would go to textile markets and bring these amazing gifts to my friends. I spent the summer of my freshman year working in Guatemala with a non profit. I went to the market to get a couple of gifts to bring back and,

being older, realized how bad the situation really was. The artisans and vendors were struggling economically. I had conversations with the women and they talked about the dip in tourism and the fact that they couldn't feed their families. I knew Bohemian trends were popular and thought the products would sell well in the US. I bought about \$100 worth of merchandise and brought it back to the US. That fall, I got an email from the School of Entrepreneurship at FSU. The email included an invitation for students, with social impact ideas, to participate in the Innovation Challenge pitch competition. I applied, got in, quickly fell in love with the idea of social entrepreneurship and began working on my idea."

King worked with her cousin who lives in Guatemala. The pair knew some of the local artisans and set out to make additional contacts and relationships. Some of their early obstacles were setting up the production chain and figuring out which artisans to partner with. "We thought we'd find artisans in the markets, but those were just the vendors," King said. "The artisans came from the highlands, so we went to them. We also established relationships with various co-ops. Once we determined where we would source our products from, we had to figure out how to get them back to the US. The exporting process is not easy and it can be expensive. Fortunately, we were able to partner with two brothers in Guatemala that run an exporting business."

Back in the US, King began selling her imported products to friends and at community markets throughout Tallahassee. Among many early challenges, establishing a fair price and marketing stood out. "Coming up with a price that was profitable was an early challenge," she said. "We focused on paying the artisans a fair price, but still wanted to keep our

costs low. Marketing and getting ourselves out there was and has been a little more difficult because of our social platform." King's business was starting to take shape and she eventually pitched in the finals of the Innovation Challenge and won first place for the 'social enterprise' division. It was around this time when King started to really identify that she wanted to be more than just a fashion company. She wanted to connect people in the US with those that didn't have a platform in other countries. King would use her prize money from the Innovation Challenge, along with a one year membership to a local coworking space called Domi Station, to develop an even bigger product line and to establish a physical location for her business.

Not only does King provide a steady and trustworthy distribution channel for her artisan partners, she's also able to pay them double what they would normally get paid. Rather than buying the final products, after the artisans have spent their own money to produce them, King pays them up-front to help cover production costs. If that wasn't generous enough, Woven Futures reinvests 20% of their net profit into microloans for the weavers and the women that don't have the up front money to make their products. They also work with a non-profit in Guatemala to help the women manage their money. King explained that the investment is a long term approach and one that will yield a higher quality product.

"This past year has been a real self discovery of who we are," she said.

"I'll be in Southeast Asia for the first half of this summer working to establish relationships with new artisans. We now have a lead designer and will be co-collaborating with local artisans to create exclusive designs with each of the countries we import from. We'll have a rug

collection from Mexico, ceramics and baskets from Bali and many other locally inspired goods. Each county has artisan groups that have so much talent, but you wouldn't really know it. We're also working on setting up relationships with co-ops in these countries that have stronger connections with the local artisans." Woven Futures currently has about 40 artisans they work with.

Woven Futures sells it's products through their website, at community thrift markets, flea markets and at Red Eye Coffee shops. King is working to expand their presence in various retail establishments throughout town. She admits it's a tough balance between wanting to scale and meeting the demands of the retailers and still maintaining that small batch feel. For those that say 'no', King sees it as an opportunity to work harder to show them the value of her products and to make possible changes to her approach.

If there was one consistent theme throughout our conversation, it was that King is adamant about the fact that what she is doing is more about creating a community of empowerment. For the people that don't have a platform, she wants to give them a voice and to help connect them with the outside world. She's taking this a step further by putting together documentaries of her artisans and sharing their stories. She wants to bring people into their lives. "It's easier to start something than to grow something," she said.

King is doing more than just growing her company, she's growing and constantly strengthening her skills as an entrepreneur. She recently pitched at Startup Grind, a gathering of entrepreneurs, innovators and thinkers that come together to learn from and support one another. She

was also accepted into the Future Founders program, a year-long fellowship for entrepreneurs that provides support, mentorship, a community of like-minded individuals and gives you that extra push when you might be doubting yourself.

What's King's advice for aspiring entrepreneurs? "The most beneficial thing I've done has been taking advantage of resources and not being afraid to ask for help," she said. "You'd be surprised by how many people want to help and give advice. I'd also encourage people to believe in themselves more. Even if you're unsure of how it's going to be received in the beginning, put yourself out there and be more aggressive." In terms of books and podcasts, King recommends *The Power of Habit*, *The Startup Student*, *The Lean Startup*, *Build to Last* and the *Girl Boss Podcast*, which includes guest entrepreneurs talking about finances, venture capital and other business related topics.