20 in their 20s

SHADES OF INSPIRATION

Skateboards made from rocket manufacturers’ waste. A subscription service for cannabis users. 3D printed aerospace parts. An art studio. Apps that connect fitness seekers with personal trainers, join donors with nonprofits, and create a 3D virtual space for home decorating.

The Business Journal’s 20 entrepreneurs in their 20s learn, market and connect digitally.

Investors – not banks – are their funding sources.

Donating time and/or money is at their core.

Incubators gave many their start.

Nearly half are founded by women.

Their stories start on the next page.
LAURA HERTZ, 28  
Gifts for Good in Westwood (as of June 10) is a business gifting company that offers gifts for companies and individuals made by nonprofit or social enterprise partners to support their own missions.  
Employees: 4  

What led you to start this business?  
Gifts for Good was born out of a class project at the USC Marshall School of Business, where my co-founder Jerry Eisenberg and I met. We had both worked for companies that gave out low-quality promotional swag to employees and clients. We wanted to make it easier to give functional and socially responsible business gifts; we developed a curated central marketplace for products made by nonprofits and social enterprises to help them grow their impact.

How did you fund it, and how are you funding it going forward?  
We have bootstrapped; we might consider raising capital in the future.

Are there advantages/disadvantages to starting a business in your 20s, and if so, what are they?  
I have energy, adaptability and determination. But, it can at times be difficult to manage employees and close deals with professionals who have decades more work experience than me.

Do you have a mentor?  
No. I have an executive coach.

Where do you go for advice regarding your business?  
My husband, my (business) co-founder, co-workers, family and close friends.

Where do you go for professional services (legal help, accounting, etc.)?  
We either hire through referrals from our network, or find freelancers through sites like Upwork and Upcounsel.

How much time/money do you spend on social media for your business?  
My team and I spend a minimum of six hours a week doing our best to remain active on various social channels.

Does social responsibility play a role in your business?  
Social responsibility is baked into our DNA. We’re pioneering a new way for companies to incorporate social impact into their standard day-to-day operations, while helping charities and social causes better sustain themselves.

Do you feel that your business is particularly tailored to the Los Angeles market, or do you feel you could have launched it in another location?  
We have found L.A. is the perfect place for an e-commerce startup with a focus on social impact.

Do you encounter skepticism from investors because of your age, and if so, how do you handle it?  
I’ve met with a handful of investors who don’t take me seriously because of my age and lack of industry knowledge. I tell them that some of the most disruptive founders in history have been people in their 20s with no industry knowledge—think Amazon, Airbnb, Uber, etc.

What do you do for fun?  
Cycling, hiking, photography, camping and road trips with my husband, Ian, and my dog Ghost.

MOHAMED NASR, 25  
West Hollywood Development and Associates in Beverly Hills is a residential real estate development company.  
Employees: 17  
Financials: Personal funding and a construction loan: investor funding, including a recent $500,000 investment.

What led you to to start this business?  
In college, I developed a passion for finance. It motivated me to pursue my Master of Business Administration with a concentration in entrepreneurship. When I learned more about real estate development, I realized I could use my education and understanding of numbers to utilize other people’s capital.

How did you fund it, and how are you funding it going forward?  
I self-funded with my partner and received construction loans to begin our first project. Now we are receiving investors’ money, both domestically and foreign.

Are there advantages/disadvantages to starting a business in your 20s, and if so, what are they?  
An advantage is I have the time to make and learn from my mistakes without them affecting others. A disadvantage is the lack of experience one has in their 20s walking into a project. I understand that this is an opportunity to learn, however the consequences can be time consuming and detrimental to my work.

Do you have a mentor?  
I have been blessed with a business partner who has helped me to stay focused. He motivates me to progress every day, and learn from every experience.

Where do you go for advice regarding your business?  
I reach out to my networks within the real estate industry, whether they may be my mentor, colleagues, professors or seasoned professionals.

Where do you go for professional services (legal help, accounting, etc.)?  
I have my own personal accountant, lawyer and contractor team.

How much time/money do you spend on social media for your business?  
The money we spend on social media is purely meant to market the properties. We spend on average $10,000 per property on online marketing. I have also spent over 100 hours developing a marketing campaign for Benedict (a home). This included filming videos, conducting photo shoots, choosing slogans and researching best avenues for exposure and messages behind every action/word.

Does social responsibility play a role in your business?  
Our goal is to always act responsibly and take great care in developing our advertising methods and videos.

Do you feel that your business is particularly tailored to the Los Angeles market, or do you feel you could have launched it in another location?  
I feel that our business model changes to reflect the market of every area we work in. The model we may choose to work will differ in Hollywood versus that of Beverly Hills. We are interested in looking outside Los Angeles to conduct business.

Do you encounter skepticism from investors because of your age, and if so, how do you handle it?  
When an investor notices my young age, I can tell they are quite hesitant to move forward, especially when issuing loans. However, after looking over my plans, and financial and profit projections, they feel very confident in working with me.

What do you do for fun?  
Read, go to the gym, spend time with family and take part in outdoor activities.
What led you to start this business?
A burning need to build a life of personal and financial freedom led me to start my first business.

How did you fund it, and how are you funding it going forward?
The first six projects that I did on the side while working full-time were funded through syndicating money from friends, and getting commitments from DRA Enterprises, a small real estate investment fund led by Devin Afilio. Now we source capital through high net worth individuals, family offices and institutional investors.

Are there advantages/disadvantages to starting a business in your 20s, and if so, what are they?
An advantage is a higher level of flexibility in your time and your ability to recover and learn from mistakes. You also can take more risks financially because you do not have anyone but yourself depending on you for income. A disadvantage is you tend to lose the ability to learn from other people’s mistakes (i.e. working for another company).

Do you have a mentor?
Yes, Matt Munson, founder and chief executive of Twenty20 in Los Angeles. Having another chief executive be my mentor has allowed me to be real of Twenty20 in Los Angeles. Having another chief executive in his 20s and has been able to draw on his own experiences.

Where do you go for advice regarding your business?
My network of resources and mentors. I have had a lot of success in turning back to professors I had from my time at USC's Master of Real Estate Program.

Where do you go for professional services (legal help, accounting, etc.)?
At a high level my go-to legal is Kramer Holcomb Sheik and my go-to CPA is Simantob & Associates, Inc.

How much time/money do you spend on social media for your business?
At a corporate level, we spend very little money or time on social media. However, at the property level, social media has become an integral part of the marketing program for sales and leasing.

Does social responsibility play a role in your business?
All properties undergo an overhaul at acquisition to improve the efficiency of water and electrical consumption to reduce each asset’s environmental footprint.

Do you feel that your business is particularly tailored to the Los Angeles market, or do you feel you could have launched it in another location?
Absolutely. Our mission is to strengthen connections and our customers matters more than my age.

Does social responsibility play a role in your business?
Absolutely. Our mission is to strengthen connections and our customers matters more than my age.

Where do you go for advice regarding your business?
My board of directors is the first place I go. Our lesson that took me seven years to fully follow.

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What do you do for fun?
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We encounter similar barriers to entry in terms of access to capital that other new organizations do.

How much time/money do you spend on social media for your business?
We spend more time than money on social media.

Does social responsibility play a role in your business?
Absolutely. Our mission is to strengthen connections and our customers matters more than my age.

What do you do for fun?
I'm an avid surfer.
What led you to start this business? My two co-founders and I went abroad for six months during our junior year of college. Our friends were moving into their first apartments and asking us for help finding furniture from across the pond. We realized that buying furniture was a real broken experience that needed our energy and focus.

How did you fund it, and how are you funding it going forward? To date, we have raised $17.2 million in funding from venture firm Founder’s Fund and Zillow Group.

Are there advantages/disadvantages to starting a business in your 20s, and if so, what are they? The advantages are you have energy, flexibility and naiveté. However, that can be a double-edged sword, as you may be naive enough to try something wild and disruptive without having the experience to execute it as efficiently as one would with prior knowledge.

Do you have a mentor? Yes, my mentor is Sean Rad, founder of Tinder. When my team comes to me with a problem, instead of giving an answer, he has taught me to ask questions. More times than not, the person coming with the problem discovers the solution while answering some simple questions.

Where do you go for advice regarding your business? I have always sought out advice from those who have done it before. It doesn’t mean I necessarily use it, but sometimes bad advice helps you get to the right solution!

Where do you go for professional services (legal help, accounting, etc.)? We work with Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati for our corporate legal matters, Greenberg Glusker for everything else legal and Xcelerate Financials for our accounting needs.

How much time/money do you spend on social media for your business? Instagram is the new storefront, and the human face behind the business is becoming more and more interesting and important to the consumer. We don’t spend a lot of money unless you count time as money!

Does social responsibility play a role in your business? Yes! Especially as a female, I feel it is my responsibility to impact younger women who may not actually know what is possible.

Do you feel that your business is particularly tailored to the Los Angeles market, or do you feel you could have launched it in another location? We do business across all 50 states. Los Angeles is one of our stronger demos.

Do you encounter skepticism from investors because of your age, and if so, how do you handle it? In Silicon Valley, either you are too young to actually know what you are talking about, or you are not young enough. The age thing has become less of an issue with the likes of Mark Zuckerberg and Evan Spiegel. The female aspect continues to be a hurdle.

What do you do for fun? I love hiking. I find it’s the perfect mix of all things relaxing – nature, sunshine, music, exercise and dogs!

David Maliglowka, 22
Give Drops Inc. in Exposition Park

Financials: Up to $500,000 raised through angel investors.

Employees: 3
Yes. I consult with him on every project and he acts as the ultimate check and balance when my mind is racing 100 miles per hour.

Where do you go for advice regarding your business? Although friends and family are the best resource and often the most available, outsiders – those who are not familiar with your business – are often the best resource. Perspective is everything. When you create a brand, a product, an investigation, there is no better feedback than an honest outsider’s opinion. It may hurt, but this is worth gold.

How much time/money do you spend on social media for your business? We spend a lot of time on social media and updating our blog. The OSINT (open source intelligence) community practically lives on Twitter, and it’s imperative to get your name out there on that specific platform. We receive a few projects off of LinkedIn as well, which is always an important piece of the social media puzzle.

Does social responsibility play a role in your business? Because of our close relationship with law enforcement, we are normally approached to help out with cases that touch the web in any way such, such as investigating a Facebook account of an ISIS sympathizer or analyzing the possible origins of a bomb threat email. We like to take these cases pro bono, as we believe we are “all in the same fight” and on the same team.

Do you feel that your business is particularly tailored to the Los Angeles market, or do you feel you could have launched it in another location? Our business is relevant on a global scale.

What led you to start this business? Throughout our careers, my business partner and I worked with both the military, the intelligence community and federal and local law enforcement, as well as traditional private investigative firms. Within the industry, we quickly learned there is a fundamental lack of understanding in the investigative and security community as it pertains to the digital environment.

How did you fund it, and how are you funding it going forward? Funding is simple. When you build your own tools to maximize efficiency, and your value is a unique skill set, minimal expenses are required.

Are there advantages/disadvantages to starting a business in your 20s, and if so, what are they? The security and intelligence industry is very networked based. Established security professionals who may have served a long and honorable career tend to overshadow the younger generation of veterans with a contemporary skill. The best part is, when the older generation reaches out to our young team, we always love to “wow” them with our skill, professionalism, and most importantly, we get results.

Do you have a mentor?

BRYAN GERBER, 27

Hemper in Mid-Wilshire sells monthly subscription cannabis boxes, limited-edition celebrity-curated boxes and third-party and original smoking products through an online head shop. The company also sells to distributors and has a manufacturing plant in India.

Employees: 10

Financials: $6 million-plus revenue; a recently closed seven-figure seed round.

We each threw in $5,000 and didn’t need to raise any capital for the first 2 1/2 years. We plan to go for our Series A round very soon.

Are there advantages/disadvantages to starting a business in your 20s, and if so, what are they? Freedom is directly based on how hard you work. This is my prime; why would I give it to anyone else and make them rich? I am essentially responsible for the financial well-being of all the guys that work for Hemper. There’s a lot of stress. But it’s high risk, high reward, in my eyes.

Where do you go for advice regarding your business? I first turn to my two co-founders, RJ (Ravjot) Bhasin and Henry Kochhar, my two co-founders. I finished college on May 18, 2015. We shipped our first boxes the next day.

How did you fund it, and how are you funding it going forward?

We have experts to turn to if we don’t know something or need anything handled by a professional.

How much time/money do you spend on social media for your business? Social media is our largest focus – and upwards of $20,000 a month on marketing. Tons of time goes into planning schedules, recruiting influencers and finding marketing channels. This industry is very difficult due to the nature of the products. Content is king.

Does social responsibility play a role in your business? Designating the cannabis community, with recreational use of marijuana now legal in eight states and medical use approved in 30, cannabis plays a legitimate, and in some cases medically important, role in many people’s lives.

Do you feel that your business is particularly tailored to the Los Angeles market, or do you feel you could have launched it in another location? Our business is relevant on a global scale.

Do you feel you could have launched it in another location? As a predominantly online commerce company, we can be based anywhere. But L.A. is the mecca of the cannabis community, so it is the place we need to be to grow the business.

Do you encounter skepticism from investors because of your age, and if so, how do you handle it? Not really. In the early days, I took about 100-plus investor calls from a variety of different people, and no one seemed to even pay attention to my age.

What do you do for fun? Eat out, work out, see a comedy show at the Comedy Store in West Hollywood, go to the beach.
ANDREW KOZLOVSKI, 22
Brainz Power in University Park is a nootropic supplements company created to support cognitive brain functions such as mental clarity, memory, and focus.

Financials: Monthly revenue between $20,000 and $30,000.

What led you to start this business? I was an avid nootropic supplements user. My business grew exponentially when I started to get more involved on social media.

Do you have a mentor? My business professors, my parents, and a few entrepreneurs.

Where do you go for advice regarding your business? I go to my business professors, my parents, other entrepreneurs.

How much time/money do you spend on social media for your business? I spend around 65 percent of our marketing budget on social media, but it really varies throughout the year. On our social media profiles where we do giveaways and really chat with our consumers, it’s a daily process.

Does social responsibility play a role in your business? We have partnered with an organization that builds schools for children in countries that need them.

Where do you go for advice regarding your business? I usually ask my father, my advisors, mentors, employees, or a few investors of mine.

How do you fund it, and how are you funding it going forward? I contributed $500 to get my first order of 24 bottles, then reinvested all the profits. Within three years, I turned my $500 into over $250,000 in revenue.

Are there advantages/disadvantages to starting a business in your 20s, and if so, what are they? Only advantages. I am highly educated, having used everything I had saved from my career (that lasted about seven months) and began on my own.

Advantages: You’re in your 20s and have more time available to you. You’re more likely to be single, and there’s not a lot at risk. You also have a lot more passion, drive, energy and purpose because you’ve yet to fail big or be jaded. Some disadvantages — or so I could be. When you’re in your 20s, you’re undoubtedly less sure of yourself. I think you’re more susceptible to take bad advice when you’re younger and take other opinions versus listening to yourself. You also likely to lack management skills.

Do you have a mentor? I have a few and wouldn’t be this far without any of them.

TIFFANY ORLI HAKIMIANPOUR, 27
Santa Monica-based Handyland is a free app that lets you book a background checked trainer or instructor on demand and in person for a workout of your choice — at any time and in any place.

Financials: $1.8 million seed round from Science Inc., Reebok and angel investors.

What led you to start this business? It was born out of a personal need. The personal training industry and entire process was inflexible, expensive and outdated to say the least. The middleman in the training industry was a big blocker, so by utilizing technology, we were able to seamlessly connect both sides of the industry to remedy it.

How did you fund it, and how are you funding it going forward? I used everything I had saved from my career (that lasted about seven months) and began on my own until I reached an incubator in Santa Monica named Science Inc. I raised my seed round — which was led by Reebok — and was able to expand and grow. We’re in the process of raising our Series A.

Where do you go for advice regarding your business? I usually ask my father, my advisors, mentors, employees, or a few investors of mine.

How much time/money do you spend on social media for your business? We spend around 65 percent of our marketing budget on social media, but it really varies throughout the year. On our social media profiles where we do giveaways and really chat with our consumers, it’s a daily process.

Do you feel that your business is particularly tailored to the Los Angeles market, or do you feel you could have launched it in another location? L.A. was the perfect place to launch and grow my business. L.A. is even better when you go to school at USC and open yourself up to its network of Trojans. With so much emphasis on social media, it was essential to be here with so many talented photographers, filmmakers, editors, etc., who help me create content daily. I don’t think I could have succeeded anywhere else.

Do you feel you could have launched it in another location? I don’t think I could have succeeded anywhere else.

Do you have a mentor? No. I met with every single professor at USC I could, and they helped me gain a lot of insight from their experience in the business world.

Where do you go for advice regarding your business? I go to my business professors, my parents, other entrepreneurs.

Do you have a mentor? I have a few and wouldn’t be this far without any of them.

What do you do for fun? I love painting, writing, traveling, reading poetry, astrology, watching movies, listening to music and hanging out with interesting people, friends, family.

Where do you go for advice regarding your business? I usually ask my father, my advisors, mentors, employees, or a few investors of mine.

How much time/money do you spend on professional services (legal help, accounting, etc.)? We began with a legal team and finance team and we’ve stuck with them to date!

Do you feel that your business is particularly tailored to the Los Angeles market, or do you feel you could have launched it in another location? It began tailored to the L.A. market, but since we’ve expanded to 10 cities in the U.S., we’ve begun adjusting and adding parts of the apps to fit a more seasonal and year-round market usage.

Do you encounter skepticism from investors because of your age, and if so, how do you handle it? I don’t think there’s anyone that can escape some sort of skepticism. I’ve encountered plenty of rejection, but I really don’t think there’s anything you can do except keep going, learning and improving.

What do you do for fun? For fun, I actually started making YouTube and Instagram videos on what it is like to run a business while being a full-time student at USC.

Los Angeles Business Journal
What led you to start this business?
Seidman: Independence. I had been planning on working in financial services, but the idea of trying to build something new was more appealing.
Arnoldi: Sam and I backpacked for nine months after college. We both knew we wanted to start something of our own, and our experience abroad gave us the courage to take action and actually give it a try.

How did you fund it, and how are you funding it going forward?
Seidman: We started the company initially with a loan from Ry’s family. Our growth has been self-funded since 2014.
Arnoldi: Our 20s are naturally a time when you go through an incredible amount of personal growth. Building a business and being a leader in your professional life means you need to evolve quickly, and the dual responsibility can be overwhelming at times. The advantage going through these changes simultaneously is that much of the wisdom you gain in one area will serve you in the other.

Do you have a mentor?
Seidman: A number of people have provided advice and ideas.
Arnoldi: Charles Arnoldi.

Where do you go for advice regarding your business?
Seidman: We have a circle of friends who are also working on starting their own companies, and are in similar stages of the process. In addition, reading articles on the internet or in books has been a key source of advice.
Arnoldi: I ask Sam. We’ve also had a ton of help and guidance from Tammy Pardee, Jen Bilik, Frank Gehry, Robin Neddy, Tim Ferris and many others.

How much time/money do you spend on social media for your business?
Seidman: We spend minimal time and money on social media.

Does social responsibility play a role in your business?
Seidman: Yes. We work with a number of non-profits in various capacities, from donating art for auctions to hosting events in our studio. Some of our partners include Planned Parenthood, Venice Family Clinic, Inner City Arts, Saint John’s Health Center, and Skid Row Housing Trust.

Do you feel that your business is particularly tailored to the Los Angeles market, or do you feel you could have launched it in another location?
Seidman: I think we could have launched in any hotspot of development and culture, but L.A. has been very conducive to our business’s growth.
Arnoldi: We draw a lot of our inspiration from our surroundings. Venice is such a unique blend of cultural and artistic styles, not to mention a hot bed of technical talent which has played a huge role in our development. I couldn’t see building Wrapped anywhere else.

What do you do for fun?
Seidman: Spend time with Bacon, the English bulldog.
Arnoldi: Motorcycles, surfing, Brazilian ju jitsu.

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Seidman: I ask Sam. We’ve also had a ton of help and guidance from Tammy Pardee, Jen Bilik, Frank Gehry, Robin Neddy, Tim Ferris and many others.
What led you to start this business?
Noone: The combination of the initial idea with Tim, strong initial funding and a passion to revamp how aerospace can evolve and grow.

How did you fund it, and how are you funding it going forward?
Ellis: Relativity has raised $45 million to date from venture capital and angel investors. This started with getting into Y Combinator and a cold email to Mark Cuban, who led our seed round the first week of starting Relativity. Then, Jordan and I raised a Series A led by Social Capital, and recent Series B funding from Andy Rubin’s firm, Playground Global.

Are there advantages/disadvantages to starting a business in your 20s, and if so, what are they?
Noone: The main advantage is that I had nothing to lose starting the company at this age. The disadvantage was that I had not yet seen the internal workings of many other companies to use as an example.
Ellis: We live in a time where young founders are viewed as disrupters instead of just naive.

Do you have a mentor?
Ellis: Many. Other founders who have been there before, and investors who have as well.

Where do you go for advice regarding your business?
Noone: I started using Paul Graham’s blog and now rely heavily on our investors’ networks.

How much time/money do you spend on social media for your business?
Noone: I personally focus on engineering milestones and spend minimal effort on social media.

What do you do for fun?
Noone: I love music festivals, hiking and traveling.
Ellis: I focus on giving back to the community in my personal life, as I have been extremely lucky in opportunities granted to me.

Do you feel that your business is particularly tailored to the Los Angeles market, or do you feel you could have launched it in another location?
Ellis: It was a huge asset to launch our company in L.A. The lifestyle in Southern California is tailored to our industry; now the active/athleisure trend has exploded across the country.

Do you feel your social responsibility plays a role in your business?
Ellis: I think there is a social responsibility to pursue goals that will inspire the next generation.

Where do you go for professional services (legal help, accounting, etc.)?
Ellis: We have close to a dozen different firms for specialized services.

What is the financial status of your business?
Ellis: We self-funded, and have continued to put profits back into the company.

Ellis: When the business started, we were manufacturing and shipping from Brazil. After less than a year, we decided to become an L.A.-based company and give back to the local community and create jobs in manufacturing and employment here.

Do you encounter skepticism from investors because of your age, and if so, how do you handle it?
Ellis: Relativity’s progress to date plus our team’s past successes at Blue Origin and SpaceX among others have helped speak for themselves.

What do you do for fun?
Ellis: Music festivals, hiking and traveling.

Ellis: learning new things, going to the gym and volunteering.
### Masha Evans, 29
DJ Maasha Events in Los Angeles provides DJ, MC and lighting services for private and commercial events in Los Angeles.

**Employees:** none; hires and collaborates with independent contractors.

**Financials:** Self-funded.

**What led you to start this business?**
I was born in Russia and grew up mostly in Brooklyn, N.Y., and graduated from Columbia University with a degree in psychology. My mom was 20 when we immigrated, and she later earned a master’s degree from New York University and ran several of her own businesses. Having her as a model of a flexible, independent life inspired me to do the same. In Los Angeles, DJing special events combines my passion for music with my entrepreneurial spirit.

**Do you encounter skepticism from investors because of your age, and if so, how do you handle it?**
Absolutely. I volunteer at Safe Place for Youth, which provides resources for homeless and at-risk youth in Venice as well as DJ its annual gala.

**How much time/money do you spend on social media for your business?**
During my first year, I spent around 20 hours a week on social media. Having established brand awareness, I usually spend five hours a week on social media. My business has grown primarily due to word of mouth and connections made on Instagram and Yelp.

**Where do you go for advice regarding your business?**
I work with Drisa Carriço at DAC Advisory Services in El Segundo.

**What do you do for fun?**
I spend time with friends. I like to explore the city, see different DJs perform, and have new experiences.

### Victor Cantey, 21
VC Visions is an East Los Angeles-based media production and photography company.

**Employees:** none; uses contractors.

**Financials:** $3,240 in 2018 gross sales through to May 21.

**What lead you to start this business?**
It all derived from writing poetry for my books and YouTube channel named VDC poetry. When I picked up my first camera, I realized I can write poetry through a lens too.

**How did you fund it, and how are you funding it going forward?**
I solely manage all of the facets of VC Visions. I currently don’t reach out for professional services. I spend more time than money on social media. I’ve spent no more than $50 on Instagram ads.

**Where do you go for professional services?**
I currently don’t reach out for professional services. I solely manage all of the facets of VC Visions.

**How much time/money do you spend on social media for your business?**
I spent no more than $50 on Instagram ads.

**Does social responsibility play a role in your business?**
Yes, social responsibility plays a significant role at VC Visions. I collect donations year-round for VC Visions’ Annual Gift-Giveaway for the homeless community on Skid Row. I love sharing the same happiness I used to receive when I was given free toys on Skid Row.

**Do you feel that your business is particularly tailored to the Los Angeles market, or do you feel you could have launched it in another location?**
Los Angeles is ideal for my line of work. There is so much potential and room for growth.

**Do you encounter skepticism from investors because of your age, and if so, how do you handle it?**
I’ve never dealt with investors.

**What do you do for fun?**
I spend time with friends. I like to explore the city, see different DJs perform, and have new experiences.
What led you to start this business?
When I was a student studying aerospace engineering at USC, I was the lead composites engineer for the Rocket Propulsion Lab. It was my job to track down carbon fiber donations to use to build our vehicles. Boeing Co. reached out to us and let us know it had some material. I knew then there was a major opportunity to solve this major waste disposal problem for the aerospace industry.

How did you fund it, and how are you funding it going forward?
Pre-seed funding from family and a partner/advisor, Greg Austry. A Kickstarter campaign for our first product, the Aileron skateboard, raised over $44,000 — 440 percent of our goal; second Kickstarter raised over $102,000, seed round raised $1.2 million. We plan to launch a series A funding round in 2019 to raise $5 million.

Are there advantages/disadvantages to starting a business in your 20s, and if so, what are they?
At this age, I have no other major responsibilities leaving me the abundance of time I can spend working on the business. There are a couple of disadvantages with being in my 20s, especially in the business of establishing connections and contracts with major aerospace companies.

Do you have a mentor?
My dad, Paul Olliges, with years of experience in the composites manufacturing and design industry. And Greg Austry.

Where do you go for advice regarding your business?
The USC network and leveraging the connections.

Where do you go for professional services (legal help, accounting, etc.)?
We are always able to find reputable resources through our investors and connections at USC. For payroll and accounting, we use Zenefits. For health insurance, we use Elevate Small Business

How much time/money do you spend on social media for your business?
About 20 percent of our monthly resources on social content and ads. Both brands rely on social media ads and organic content to drive sales.

Does social responsibility play a role in your business?
Our company mission is to capture as much carbon fiber waste before it makes its way into the landfill, saving an incredibly valuable resource and doing something good for the earth.

Do you feel that your business is particularly tailoring to the Los Angeles market, or do you feel you could have launched it in another location?
Los Angeles is a great place for our business to start because of the vibrant aerospace community in the area.

Do you encounter skepticism from investors because of your age, and if so, how do you handle it?
Investors that I talk with can see the excitement and passion that I have for the business, and that eliminates most skeptics. When I do encounter any skepticism due to age, my team is there to back me up with their many years of experience.

What do you do for fun?
Skating, climbing, skiing or surfing.
What led you to start this business? I had just graduated college and was looking to pursue a career in the fashion industry. I had an interview with Nasty Gal but never heard back from them. I started 12th Tribe by accident – out of pure passion and hard work at a hobby.

How did you fund it, and how are you funding it going forward? It is self-funded with less than $1,000. I was fortunate to be profitable from day one, and have been self-funding the business ever since.

Are there advantages/disadvantages to starting a business in your 20s, and if so, what are they? There are a lot of young business owners these days, so it makes it a lot of fun to connect with like-minded people your age! However, the only set back of being so young is you don’t have years of experience. I am learning as I go. I love being young in this position, though, because it allows me to set up for my future and truly love what I do!

Do you have a mentor? I do. My mom.

Where do you go for advice regarding your business? I do a lot of research online, read books, articles and connect with individuals in the same industry or similar industries. I am fortunate to have a few close friends who are launching businesses as well, and we can bounce ideas off of each other. The best advice is from someone who has been there before. If you don’t have someone close to you who you can ask, listening to a podcast will do the trick!

Where do you go for professional services (legal help, accounting, etc.)? I have an in-house accountant, and my CPA is out of office.

How much time/money do you spend on social media for your business? We maintain corporate socials, which we run in-house.

Does social responsibility play a role in your business? We recently launched Select Impact, the philanthropic program we’ve built to help allocate our resources and capital to causes that align with the three pillars of action we’ve defined (diversity and inclusion, mental health and entrepreneurship). We host events, volunteer days and organize social campaigns around causes.

Do you feel that your business is particularly tailored to the Los Angeles market, or do you feel you could have launched it in another location? Definitely tailored to L.A., given the focus in entertainment.

Do you encounter skepticism from investors because of your age, and if so, how do you handle it? We’ve never pursued investment, but people in the past have tried to use my age against me when looking to discredit me. Thankfully, the work speaks for itself, so it hasn’t been a real problem.

What do you do for fun? Ideally, it’s traveling. It’s important to get out of your bubble and see new places, so that’s always something I try to make time for.