How Ubuntu Baba Sells Baby Carriers with Love and WooCommerce

CUSTOMER STORIES WRITTEN BY MARINA PAPE

There's a saying that a worried mother does better research than the FBI. When it comes to caring for, feeding and clothing tiny humans, the maternal force is strong.

Shannon of Ubuntu Baba recognised an opportunity from her frictional experience trying to find a suitable baby carrier online, and **built a beautiful business to serve new mums with a happy solution**.

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Shop
Reviews
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Ubuntu Baba makes parents happy.

Read on for the story of another entrepreneurial mum who built a successful business — including prototyping, manufacturing, distribution, and setting up and customizing her own online store. Plus learn why she swears by love as a marketing tactic:

> *If you genuinely care about what you're doing and how your product can change a life, sales will organically happen. The best marketing tactic is to have an awesome product and to really love what you're doing.*

What it took to go from startup to selling online

As a self-described serial entrepreneur, Shannon had bought many a random domain name and launched little niche businesses, creating digital products that she spent months working on only to sell two (when she thought she'd sell 100 in a week).

Good ideas are often born from un-good moments (friction, dissatisfaction and the less-then-perfect) and this was the case with Shannon. As a brand new mum looking for a way to carry her little human, she spent $500+ and battled through five different baby carriers with no joy:

> ***New mom + stretchy wrap = ingle angle silver bangle disaster. I eventually got the hang of it, in fact I became quite the pro, but with all that fabric wrapped around us during the hot Cape Town summer, we were both overheating, and unfortunately 'on me' was the only place he would sleep.***
>
> ***After trying out numerous other baby carriers and having problems with the wide, heavily padded waistbands hurting my c-section scar, I decided it was time to design my own.***

The mission: design something simple, breathable, comfortable.

Shannon's goal was to create an easy to use, breathable and comfortable carrier that could be used from the newborn days onwards. After many different prototypes and assuring her design team time and time again "*okay, I swear this is the one!*" she finally arrived at her dream baby carrier and it was time to get stitching.

Shannon wasn't great at sewing, but her father owned a factory that manufactured outdoor gear, backpacks, and hiking equipment. They started making around 20 per month and are now doing about 100 (and struggling to keep up with orders). **The carriers are made locally, which many customers value about the brand.**

Locally made carriers charm mamas — and babies.

In her previous life as a web designer, Shannon had used WordPress and set up quite a few WooCommerce stores for clients, so choosing her software was easy.

She summarised the process of how she got from startup to selling in 10 points:

1. Firstly, I solved my own problem and I knew others were struggling in this area too
2. I made about five carriers and asked other mums to test for me
3. I collected their feedback, good and bad, and made changes to the product until all the feedback was positive and I knew I had the best product on the market
4. I got their permission to use their feedback as testimonials for marketing
5. I got my boyfriend to take some great photos of me wearing my son in the carrier
6. I created a Facebook and Instagram page and joined all the online babywearing communities and started to post and get involved
7. I made a super basic demo video in my lounge showing how easy it was to use my carrier and showing off all the unique features (this was huge – everyone loved that they could see it in action with a real live baby!)
8. I setup my online store and started blogging about mom stuff
9. I used Facebook to share my blog posts and promote them. I spent R50 on a promoted post and made my first real sale to a total stranger in Johannesburg!
10. I made sure to have a personal connection with every single customer from the

beginning and tried my best to get a photograph and a testimonial from them so I could use it to promote the product further.

> ***I'm a creative – I tell people I can code, but I really mean that I can click "inspect element" and edit CSS! I love WordPress because whatever your problem is, no doubt someone has made a plugin for it.***

Simple right? Yet so many great business ideas stay on paper. Let's get into the detail of some of the important decision and steps along the way.

The naming of Ubuntu Baba

Naming is a key part of every product and business journey. Too obvious, too subtle, too weird, URL already taken… Sometimes it's the easiest thing to decide, other times there are many pivots before the perfect name is happened upon.

For Shannon, *Ubuntu Baba* was a thoughtful and meaningful signifier. As a South African, she grew up seeing hardworking African woman carrying babies on their backs in order to be able to get on with life:

> ***In African culture, it's just natural that you "wear" your baby on your body, but with Western culture, it's a completely foreign idea to us. When I discovered babywearing, it completely changed my world as a first time mom.***

She decided she wanted to find an African name for her carrier. The word "Ubuntu" is an African term that roughly translates to *human kindness* and is also said to mean *I am because we are,* which Shannon loved.

> ***It gave me so much confidence to see something I created changing the lives of other Moms. I loved it.***

A philosophy of vulnerability and care

One of the questions I ask store owners is how they use marketing to bring people to their store. Shannon's answer was refreshing indeed (and made me think a little harder about how I usually phrase the question!).

The tactic? **Love.** It doesn't get more genuine, honest and truly valuable than this:

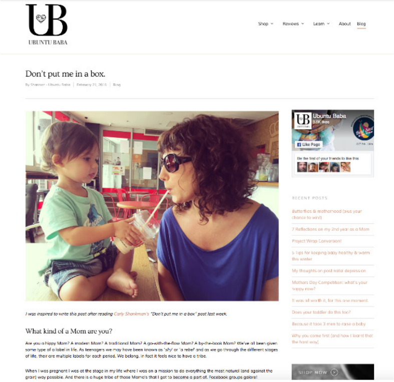
> ***If you genuinely care about what you're doing and how your product can change their life, the sales will organically happen. You use the right words, you speak their language, you care.***
>
> ***Sometimes people will read one newsletter and purchase. Sometimes it takes three months. Sometimes they'll hear about it from a friend or see a photo on Facebook. It's difficult to measure. The best tactic is to have an awesome product and to really love what you're doing.***

Another passion point for Shannon: the amount of clickbait out there preying on pregnancy hormones, making women believe that they're meant to look like supermodels during pregnancy, labour, the birth, the newborn days. **Part of her vision for her business is to combat the false expectations society places on them with honest stories and tips**.

> ***With all the fakeness and nonsense out there on social media, I think we need to be real with each other as much as possible. The world needs more vulnerability!***

The [Ubuntu Baba blog]() is a rich resource with posts on a broad variety of topics written to serve new mums. As it's genuine to the core, this content is exactly what her customers would be interested in — marketing (love) at its best.

Shannon uses her blog to reveals the process of product development and production — for example, [Project Wrap Conversion]() — bringing people into the story of the brand and business behind-the-scenes. This is a wonderful way of building a sense of community.



Don't put me in a box.

By Shannon - Ubuntu Baba | February 21, 2016 | Blog

I was inspired to write this post after reading Carly Shankman's "Don't put me in a box" post last week.

What kind of a Mom are you?

Are you a hippy Mom? A modern Mom? A traditional Mom? A go-with-the-flow Mom? A by-the-book Mom? We've all been given some type of a label in life. As teenagers we may have been known as '*shy*' or '*a rebel*' and as we go through the different stages of life, their are multiple labels for each period. We belong. In fact it feels nice to have a tribe.

When I was pregnant I was at the stage in my life where I was on a mission to do everything the most natural (and against the grain) way possible. And there is a huge tribe of those Moma's that I got to become a part of. Facebook groups galore!

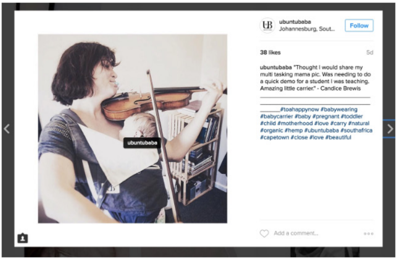
RECENT POSTS

- Butterflies & motherhood (plus your chance to win!)
- 7 Reflections on my 2nd year as a Mom
- Project Wrap Conversion!
- 5 Tips for keeping baby healthy & warm this winter
- My thoughts on post natal depression
- Mothers Day Competition: what's your happy now?
- It was all worth it, for this one moment.
- Does your toddler do this too?
- Because it took 3 men to raise a baby
- Why you come first (and how I learnt that the hard way)

Shannon writes faithfully on the Ubuntu Baba blog, with topics ranging from personal stories to advice to giveaways.

> ***#toahappynow is our slogan. I remember when I had my teeny little screaming baby in my arms and I would just wish myself into the future when he wouldn't need me as much. I just wanted to be happy like all the other Moms on Instagram were! It doesn't have to be that way and babywearing can honestly change that scene for a new Mom.***

The carriers help mums create the happy "now" moments they're after, and the number of comments on the posts and beautiful images shared are evidence of this.



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38 likes 5d

ubuntubaba "Thought I would share my multi tasking mama pic. Was needing to do a quick demo for a student I was teaching. Amazing little carrier." - Candice Brewis

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_______#toahappynow #babywearing #babycarrier #baby #pregnant #toddler #child #motherhood #love #carry #natural #organic #hemp #ubuntubaba #southafrica #capetown #close #love #beautiful

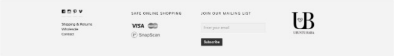
A beautiful example of how the carriers enable mums to do their thing, with baba.

Security, spam, and payments

Not the most exciting and sexy aspect of site design, but ensuring security, stability, and protection from spammers and attack is vital. Site security **is an easy-to-neglect but never-worth-ignoring thing**.

Shannon's favorite plugins for protecting her site are Akismet, to get rid of spam, and Jetpack, which she also uses for quick look stats and social media sharing buttons.

While the majority of Shannon's customers pay via EFT, she has chosen to accept credit cards with PayFast as well as SnapScan payments. South Africa is a maturing eCommerce market, and to inspire confidence, a reassuring message and the globally recognizable logos are included in the footer:



Secure payment information is included in the footer, making shoppers feel reassured.

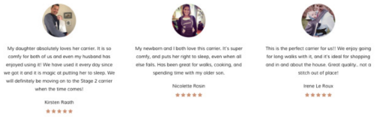
Reviews, testimonials, and FAQs allow customers to feel confident while they shop

When dealing with tiny humans, safety is huge. Customer education is extremely important: a baby carrier worn incorrectly could lead to suffocation (just like many other baby products). **How does one instil confidence from the other side of the internet?**

Social proof is known to be one of the best ways to increase conversions online, and you can read more about how to tap into your hidden social proof on our blog. How Shannon does it:

> ***I encourage reviews with a follow up email which goes out seven days after a sale has been made. It's just a really friendly note to say thanks so much for their order and directs them to leave a review on our Facebook page.***

Shannon also uses the Testimonials plugin which works beautifully to display friendly customer faces and written reviews:



My daughter absolutely loves her carrier. It is so comfy for both of us and even my husband has enjoyed using it! We have used it every day since we got it and it is magic at putting her to sleep. We will definitely be moving on to the Stage 2 carrier when the time comes!

Kirsten Raath

★★★★★

My newborn and I both love this carrier. It's super comfy, and puts her right to sleep, even when all else fails. Has been great for walks, cooking, and spending time with my older son.

Nicolette Rosin

★★★★★

This is the perfect carrier for us!! We enjoy going for long walks with it, and it's ideal for shopping and in and about the house. Great quality.. not a stitch out of place!

Irene Le Roux

★★★★★

Reviews reassure customers who aren't yet sure about their decision.

She also uses a FAQs page to **answer common questions before they're asked** (or if they come up again):

> ***We get inundated with questions about our product on a daily basis. It's nice to have a FAQs page as a place to just copy and paste from and adapt where needed instead of writing emails from scratch every time. I'm constantly adding to this page, and it's still a work in progress. Funnily enough it doesn't get that much traffic, but it's helpful to us!***

The layout and UX of the store is constantly changing as Shannon learns more about how clients interact with information online. She used to aim to "take the client on a magical journey towards the add to cart page" but is now **shortening that journey in favor of making it quick and easy**. As she sums it up:

> ***This is what we sell, this is how it can solve your problem, this is what it costs, here's how to buy it. Boom.***

This simplification extends to the product page layout, which used to be way more cluttered with way more info, now narrowed down to only the points she knows customers are looking for. Making the add to cart button perfectly visible was also a big priority.

Communication and community building after the sale is finished

To keep the conversation going post-purchase, customers are invited to subscribe to Ubuntu Baba's emails at checkout with WooCommerce Subscribe to Newsletter. Shannon uses the WooCommerce Email Customizer and MailMunch to create beautiful lead forms.

Social media is also an integral way Ubuntu Baba stays connected to customers. Shannon displays her social icons on the site with WP Social Icons to encourage following, and **spends a pretty huge amount of time crafting great content for Instagram, Pinterest, and Facebook**:

> ***New moms spend a lot of time on Facebook, posting photos of their little ones, hanging out in Mommy groups, and doing their FBI level research. They also use Instagram to document their babies lives, so in turn that means we need to be on there too.***

To get 400+ likes on a Facebook post when your community is 3k is impressive to say the least.

Her advice when it comes to social media focus: **know where your customer is hanging out online and make sure you're there, too** (which is why you won't find Ubuntu Baba on Twitter).

Growing pains, hurdles, and advice for your new business

Shannon's biggest challenge to date has been finding a reliable courier service to deliver orders to customers' doorsteps smoothly:

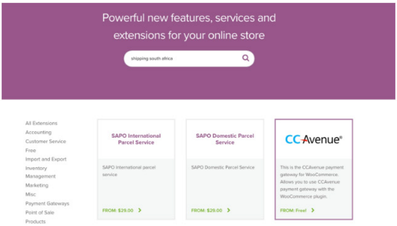
> ***I initially drove the orders around Cape Town myself when we were only selling a couple a month, and I would use the post office for the orders up country, but eventually I needed a courier company.***

After two pretty bad experiences with local service providers, she was approached by a proactive rep from a company who'd seen the brand online. They were almost 30% more expensive than the previous two companies she'd used, but aware of the damage the poor service delivery was doing to her customer experience, Shannon decided to take the cost-plunge and give it a try.

The service was excellent and completely changed the way she did things:

> ***From then on I decided I would only work with the very best people and companies to support the business.***

Launching a successful online business often hangs in the balance of the quality of partners and service providers you choose to partner with. If you're looking for something you can trust, take a look at the full list of shipping integrations that work with WooCommerce.



Powerful new features, services and extensions for your online store

shipping south africa

SAPO International Parcel Service

SAPO International parcel service

SAPO Domestic Parcel Service

SAPO Domestic Parcel Service

This is the CCAvenue payment gateway for WooCommerce. Allows you to use CCAvenue payment gateway with the WooCommerce plugin.

Lots of shipping integrations means you'll be able to find a partner you can trust.

Growth also meant a change in storage and her first hire. Shannon had been keeping stock at her house (in her boyfriend's office, driving him nuts and making a mess) and doing all of the fulfilment herself, but a month ago she hired an operations coordinator who works at the factory and runs Ubuntu Baba in terms of couriers, stock, deliveries, customer service, and so on.

Shannon's top piece of advice for small business owners? **Focus on the little victories.**

> ***It's tough running your own business, so you have to celebrate all the small things. Nothing compares to Whatsapp messages late at night from my happy mamas. Those are the best.***

An inspiring story of a small business owner blazing a trail in product innovation, honest marketing and genuinely valuable content and conversation. We'll be watching the Ubuntu Baba space with great interest and admiration.

Have a story of your own you'd like to share? If you've used WooCommerce to build something truly unique, leave us a note in the comments with a link to your store — you just might be the next store we highlight here.