

# Flex-N-Fly: Piloting travel wellness to the world

## A great idea takes off

Flex-N-Fly Founder and CEO Youmie Jean Francois was a professional backup dancer. Her unique livelihood took her to countless new locales...and countless airports along the way.

Francois considered airports exciting gateways to her latest adventures. But she noticed that other travelers around her seemed uneasy and anxious. She wanted to cultivate a place for relaxation amidst the bustle of busy airports. And the idea for Flex-N-Fly was born.

The Flex-N-Fly mission is to help travelers relax, and to build a sense of community within airports. Francois helps fliers find their 'inner sanctuary' by offering minimalist travel products that provide peace of mind and 'The Flex 35'—a 35-minute session of stretching, breathing, and restorative yoga

Francois shared her high-flying goals for Flex-N-Fly, how she stays centered as a business owner, and the many ways the solutions found in [PayPal Open](#) support her in growing her business, paying her employees, and launching her nonprofit.



**We're here to make an impact. We're here to change the way people travel**

## Expect some turbulence

**"Your business will humble you."**

Like many founders, Francois wears many hats. She is the owner, the CEO, the marketer, and the Creative Director. But starting Flex-N-Fly had additional challenges.

By 2019, Francois had developed her line of sleek, minimalist "Flex Bag" travel bags and "Flex Mat" yoga mats.

In 2020, Francois prepared to open her first travel wellness location at JFK airport. Then, the pandemic grounded her dream. "Your business will humble you," Francois reflected.

Without knowing what the world's timeline might be, Francois pressed forward. While her airport-based endeavors were paused, her bags and yoga mats began to sell out at specialty markets, pop-ups, and online.

Today, Francois is back on track. Flex-N-Fly brings relaxation to travelers all over the country, and sales of her popular bags and yoga mats continue to climb.

## Trust your tools

**"I recommend PayPal to everyone I work with."**

Since her first Flex Bag and Flex Mat sales, Francois has relied on PayPal Open to make running her business easier. When she built the Flex-N-Fly ecommerce site, adding [PayPal Checkout](#) was a no-brainer.

"People buy who, not what," and PayPal was a brand—a who—she already trusted from personal experience. When her customers see the PayPal logo at checkout, they have confidence that they're in for a smooth landing.

PayPal Checkout allows Flex-N-Fly to accept payments from shoppers around the world. "I like the fact that if I say, 'Hey, do you have PayPal?' Invariably people respond with, 'Yes, I do!'"

## Focus on fostering community

**"A lot of my sales come from the same people."**

Thanks to Francois' relentless community-building, Flex-N-Fly now has an impressive following. By tracking sales on her PayPal merchant dashboard, she sees its enormous value. "Our email list is probably the biggest way we make our income. A lot of sales come from returning customers. They love my products and recommend them to everyone."

One of the ways she's expanded her audience to younger customers is by offering [Venmo](#) online and in person. "Venmo is great—especially with Generation Z and Millennials," Francois observed. She also loves the social component of Venmo and how customer comments about her products help amplify her brand's awareness.

When Francois tables at pop-ups and specialty markets, she



also loves the ease and freedom of having a custom [PayPal QR Code](#). The PayPal QR Code allows her to get paid—or pay someone else for goods—with confidence, by opening her PayPal app.<sup>1</sup> Whether Francois is selling at South by Southwest, buying textile samples in Senegal, or tabling at a travel show in her hometown of NYC, she doesn't need special payment equipment.

## Nurturing a people-powered business

**"I don't overlook people."**

When asked who inspires her the most, Francois gushed, "In every life, I will choose Black women. I have never been more supported, more respected, more honored, more motivated, more inspired."

She puts her inspiration into action when it comes to hiring. Francois wants candidates from every background and lived experience, no matter their skin color or disability. She knows what it is to be passed over and believes in access for all. "When I'm hiring, I'm like, 'Where do you best fit in my company?' I don't overlook people."

And once she onboards a new employee, Francois uses PayPal to compensate her staff.



## More runway, more opportunities

Francois recently launched a nonprofit called The Flex-N-Fly Foundation. An important part of the foundation is the annual Flex Summit and Gala, which brings her thriving new community together with industry leaders, experts, and enthusiasts.

Says Francois, “Our vision is to empower underserved communities through travel, wellness, and entrepreneurship.” Francois knows what lack of access feels like, and she’s determined open up a world of possibilities for those in similar situations.

PayPal played a pivotal role for Francois’ efforts. As part of launching the Flex-N-Fly Foundation, she organized and hosted her first Flex Summit in downtown Manhattan with a loan through [PayPal Loan Builder](#).<sup>2</sup>

When Francois received the loan, she saw her rate, and payment terms—everything she needed to know on the dashboard in her PayPal business account. “It was so easy. It made everything automatic. PayPal takes the money out, and I don’t even have to think about it.”

PayPal Loan Builder allowed her to successfully host the first Flex Summit and has given her breathing room as she grows.

## Taking Flex-N-Fly to new heights

**“We want to be in as many airports as we can.”**

Since the earliest days for Flex-N-Fly, Francois has aligned with the nonprofit Buy From a Black Woman, which supports Black women business owners.

The relationship led to Flex-N-Fly products being included in the Buy From A Black Woman Holiday Market. “When that happened,” says Francois, “my PayPal sales went crazy. There were so many orders coming in.” Since then, she’s gotten Flex-N-Fly products into other recognized retailers, giving her even greater reach.

Flex-N-Fly’s payment tools also include [PayPal Invoicing](#), which Francois uses to manage transactions with her new retail partners. The guided, intuitive process easily turns estimates into invoices. On her merchant dashboard, Francois is able to track payment status and schedule payment reminders.

## The sky’s the limit

**“You don’t have the privilege of second-guessing yourself.”**

Francois wants Flex-N-Fly to be known as the leader in travel wellness. So, she keeps showing up every day, taking every meeting, and making every connection to keep growing. “There are days when there will be tears in your eyes while you’re sending yet another email asking for an opportunity, asking someone to partner with you, asking someone to invest in your business,” Francois acknowledges.

Nonetheless, Francois has learned to soar above the challenges and self-doubt. “You don’t have the privilege of second-guessing yourself. There’s plenty of other people doing that for you.”

PayPal remains Francois’ trusted resource at every stage of growth. “I love how many solutions PayPal has available. I didn’t think it could get better, but it just keeps getting better.”



**I trust PayPal and I go with what I trust**

These solutions are available with [PayPal Open](#). One platform for all business:

PayPal Checkout

Venmo

PayPal Invoicing

PayPal QR Code

PayPal Loan Builder