

RMC STUDENT DEVELOPS SUCCESSFUL ONLINE BUSINESS

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BILLINGS -- Cody Rose won't graduate from Rocky Mountain College for a year, but he's already a CEO and founder of a successful online business, Hypedupsports.

Want an autographed LeBron James jacket? A Tony Romo-signed helmet? Rose can get it for you. He can even get autographed something that you have, like a copy of Sports Illustrated you saved because it featured Michael Jordan.

Rose, who describes himself as a "huge sports fan who loves collecting memorabilia," started the sports memorabilia business with his younger brother.

"We decided to turn our passion into a business," Rose said. "Because I am a fan, I knew there was an opportunity."

Having that passion about a business cannot be underestimated. In November, friends and billionaires, Warren Buffet and Bill Gates, met with students at Columbia University as part of a CNBC town hall meeting. When asked how he amassed his fortune, Buffet said, "First, you have to find out what you're passionate about. If you do what you have an interest in, you'll be successful. You can't just start out to make a lot of money."

Gates echoed Buffet's advice. "Money was not the primary goal. Doing what I loved was," he said.

That kind of advice is similar to what Prof. James Smith, a 1995 RMC graduate who then earned his master's in business administration at the University of Montana and now teaches business administration and economics at his alma mater, tells his students, according to Cody Rose.

"He knew what I wanted to do is something I've been crazy about for all my life," said Rose. "He told me that's the best place to start."

The online sports memorabilia business Rose now owns really began several years ago when he approached Smith for advice.

“He put me in touch with people in the sports memorabilia business who could offer insights. He taught me basic business skills,” Rose said of Smith.

Within a few weeks of establishing their first online site, Rose and his brother, were selling items quickly, leading to development of a more professional website.

“It took a year, but now we have one of the top sites out there and we’re using all the best technology. The only partner I have is my 17-year-old brother. Working from home definitely improves the profits.”

The beauty of the business is how much they can outsource, from web management to shipping. Rose concentrates on the marketing aspect.

“We are one of the first sports memorabilia businesses to use Twitter, Facebook, and other social media sites for marketing,” he added.

Sports memorabilia is nearly a billion dollar business and has not slowed during the recession.

“Everyone wants to own something from his or her favorite athlete or team,” Rose said.

The passion Rose has for his business was important, but was not enough to make the business successful, he acknowledges. His time at Rocky made the difference. First, he relied on Smith. Second, he made the most of his classes.

“Accounting, communication, economics . . . from those skills learned at Rocky I have a good knowledge of how to run a successful business.

For this young entrepreneur here’s the old bottom line.

“I have a business that operates 24/7, that is paying for my college education and making money, and that involves something I love. You can’t beat that,” he said.

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