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# Creating a Handheld Bidet Earning \$10k/mo



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Ahmad Iqbal

Founder, **Nadeef Bidet**

\$10K

REVENUE/MO



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## Hi! Tell me about you and your business.

My name is Ahmad Iqbal and I started **Nadeef Bidet** two years ago. I am 29 years old, and I'm currently based in Mississauga, a suburb of Toronto, Canada.

Nadeef is a hand-held bidet company. Its purpose is to provide a hygienic bathroom experience. A bidet is like a mini shower you can use while you're on the toilet. Without getting **too** graphic, just like you wouldn't just wipe off chocolate cake from a plate with a kleenex and call it clean, I don't think it makes sense for bathroom users to just use toilet paper.

Currently, we're growing slow and steady. The first year was quite slow because I was still figuring things out, 2016 was a lot better, and 2017 has also been great. It's growing every year, and each year I'm having to spend less time marketing it.

As the sole founder, I'm doing sourcing, quality control, fulfillment (much of my inventory is in my garage and my trunk), customer service, website management, as well as marketing of course. And when I need help, my awesome family steps up.



## What's your backstory and how did you come up with the idea?

I was born in Canada, but as a child, my family and I moved around the world a lot. Before turning 22, I had lived in Pakistan, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Korea, England, United States, Italy, Dubai, not to mention Canada. My dad has a pretty cool job which required him to spend years at a time in different countries, and I believe that travel gave me a lot of perspective and maturity for my age.

I didn't know it at the time, but the traveling was what eventually gave me the idea to start Nadeef. Basically, in Middle Eastern countries and places like Japan, Korea, and Pakistan, having a bidet is quite common. In fact, the houses and apartments have hand-held bidets built in as standard. So growing up with this bathroom hygiene I expected it as standard. Personally, I cannot use a bathroom now without a hand-held bidet - it just doesn't feel right. There are millions of people that share this pain with me; my friends and family, and many people in our community.

“ I see entrepreneurship as an equation. On one side of the equation is product, and on the other side is marketing. Most people just solve for the product side.

The substitute that we immigrants have found is to use what we call a “lota” which is basically like a water-pot. It does the trick, but having a real hand-held bidet is like a 10x improvement on the whole experience. I used the water-pot method for all my years in Canada (I moved to Canada for university), but a few years ago decided this was a problem worth solving. And that's how I got started with it.

I started by asking my target market (my friends and family in North America) why they don't have hand-held bidets installed in their toilets. I got two recurring answers:

1. Seems like it would be hard to install, needed renovations, or some very sophisticated plumbing.
2. They don't sell them here.

I knew that both of these concerns were addressable. For the first issue, I just had to make sure the design of the bidets were super easy to install - the Nadeef is installable within two minutes without any tools, drills, or screws needed. And the second issue could be solved through Facebook advertising - people just needed the awareness.

I've always been entrepreneurial. I had a previous tech startup between the ages of 22-26, which failed. But, I learned a lot during the process, especially wholesaling through Chinese manufacturers, something I learned from my co-founder at the time. Our previous startup was an interactive name badge business where we sourced lanyards and name tags from Alibaba. That eventually pivoted into an online ticketing company called Atendy, but we had to shut down due to lack of traction. Both my co-founder and I had no idea how to run a tech startup. We made many bad team decisions, partnership decisions, and frankly, we were not in the right place in our lives to handle success. Also, we had no idea how to be successful with online marketing.

## **Describe the process of creating Nadeef.**

First things first, I searched through [Alibaba's](#) directory to find any suppliers that manufactured hand-held bidets. I found some suppliers who I thought were good and ordered a sample from about 5 of them. Once the samples arrived, I installed each one over the course of a couple of weeks and tested it on a daily basis for quality. After about four months, I found one design which I thought was really good and the had the best quality. When it comes to plumbing type products, you don't want to risk anything because leaks can be very costly to a homeowner. Quality was a huge concern.

After I figured out which supplier I liked, I created my store on [Shopify](#), and went live with sales. I knew a little about Facebook advertising, so I just published an ad targeting immigrants in my suburb. I didn't have any inventory because I couldn't afford it. I just wanted to know if people would buy. And it turned out a lot did.

I placed my first inventory order after I made about 20 sales. By the time I received that shipment of 100 units, I had already sold the 80 that were left over.





At this time I didn't have the foresight around the packaging of the box. I wanted at least some brown paper wrapping, so I went to Ikea where they have those large rolls of brown construction paper that you can take for free and tore off like 10 meters of it. I had to basically gift wrap all those boxes by hand. In my next order, I asked the manufacturer to package them in brown boxes individually.

Getting so many sales right away was pretty awesome. Shortly after, I placed another order for 250 units. We were off to the races pretty much from the start. I know this is a rare occurrence, but I wasn't surprised. I knew there was a need for this product, I knew the pain-point, and I understood my market.

An important distinction I made at first was to only target my local market. There are a lot of Pakistani, Indian and Middle Eastern immigrants in Toronto, so the audience was large enough for me to just focus here.

## How have you attracted new customers?

**Facebook Ads** were what got the party started, but growing beyond marketing on Facebook took a little while. Initially, I thought it was all I needed to know, but soon realized I needed to figure out other facets of online marketing.

I soon discovered the power of "building roads" to my product. In entrepreneurship, I think newbies fall prey to the notion that "if you build it they will come", but this is so false. This is what burned me on my first tech startup - I was too focused on the product and not enough on the **roads** to the product.

I see entrepreneurship as an equation. On one side of the equation is **product**, and on the other side is **marketing**. Most people just solve for the product side. E-commerce entrepreneurs spend too much time thinking about whether or not they have the right product, sourcing the product, designing, logo, packaging, etc. And when it comes to marketing, they think Google Ads or Facebook Ads are sufficient. But it is not. By relying on those channels, you are **renting** roads, and you'll always have to pay to use them. It's better to build your own roads.

These days, with Alibaba and the rise of new software tools like Shopify, building the product and website is the easy part. There are repeatable formulas you can implement to get a product listed on a website. The hard, the uncertain, the chaotic, and the variable part is marketing and understanding your customer. And it's not just advertising - it also includes learning, experimenting, delivering, supporting, and growing. The market is a living thing. The product is just an inanimate object.

Sorry for the rant, but basically I just started posting my products through every channel (road) I could find. I just started experimenting a lot. I posted on [Kijiji](#), a Canadian classified ads platform, and [eBay](#). I added buy buttons to my [Facebook page](#). I started a [blog](#) on the website. I reached out to influencers. I started adding discount coupons inside the packaging for my customers to share with their friends. I put up flyers at local Halal grocers. I wrote [Quora](#) posts. I invested in SEO. I even bought ads in local foreign language TV channels.

But all said and done, Facebook Ads is still my most successful funnel because my audience is just so well defined. Right now, the majority of my sales come from Kijiji, Facebook, and organic search results.

## **If you could go back, would you do anything differently?**

I would have focused more on the US market. Canada is good, but the US is so much bigger. I still haven't been able to crack that nut. Cost per acquisition in the US is significantly higher than CPA in Canada, which is what has kept me in Canada mostly.

I would also go back to earlier this year and spend more time marketing through non-Facebook channels. Earlier this year I told myself I wanted to focus on organic and owned traffic. So, this summer I turned off all my Facebook ads. I did this at the wrong time. I shouldn't have done it in the summer when my sales are higher than other times of the year due to the increase of people moving into new homes. The lesson I learned was when you know something works, then double down on it. I did the opposite. I knew my sales were high in the summer of last year, but I neglected that fact when I turned off my ads in the summer this year.

## **How have you dealt with competition?**

I don't think about competition. I know my niche. I know my audience segment. I sometimes worry about Amazon because customers could easily just discover the product through my site but then go to Amazon to buy from there. But I provide much better customer service. A large subset of any audience will always appreciate good customer service. I think customer service and customer relationships are my competitive advantage.

Funny story is, I focused so much on customer service and experience in the beginning that I even offered installation services to anyone who bought two or more bidets within the Greater Toronto Area. I discovered there were loads of potential customers were unsure of their own ability to install the bidet. They wanted someone to do it for them.

So, I figured I could do the installations myself for my customers. Not only was this another revenue stream, but also give me face to face time with my customers and encourage word of mouth to their friends.

So, between Summer 2015 and Summer 2016, for one year, I was a "plumber" on evenings and weekends installing bidets. I did all of this while I still had my full-time job as a Senior Technology Consultant at a top global consulting firm. That was both a fun and not so fun experience. It was fun to take on this other persona of a tradesman, blue-collar worker, given that my full-time job was as a white-collar consultant. During the day I was advising senior



executives about their technology strategies, and on nights and weekends, I was a plumber.

But, it was also not fun in the sense that I had to interact with a lot of rude people. I now understand the saying “see how someone treats their waiter at a restaurant.” I could tell some people assumed I was some punk kid. Sometimes after working late I’d still have a suit and tie on installing bidets. That was a funny sight, and definitely made a word-of-mouth worthy impression!

I had to eventually stop offering this service because I no longer had to time, and because I hate traffic. I found myself being stuck in traffic for four hours a day between commuting to and from the office, and then to and from customers’ homes. But from a revenue aspect, it was worth it. Those customers would often refer their friends, and I still get referrals to this day from installations I did two years ago.

## **Where you are at now and what are your plans for the future?**

Right now, I’m actually focused on my new technology business. While I was running Nadeef on Shopify, I saw lots of opportunities for software tools to help make other merchants’ lives easier. Since I became a semi-successful small e-retailer I started to see the world through that lens. For this reason, my friend and I started building Shopify apps.

The first app we built was called Shopiflip. It was a marketplace to buy and sell Shopify stores. We built this because we realized small businesses are extremely illiquid assets. You can sell a house pretty easily, but it’s hard to sell a business. That lack of liquidity could make an entrepreneur less likely to start a business. So we developed a marketplace where Shopify merchants could list their stores and buyers could bid on them. Even if a store didn’t make much money, an entrepreneur could de-risk their startup efforts by at least selling it for a few hundred dollars (like a plug and play store).

We were pretty excited about what we built. My friend and I even had conversations with senior folks at Shopify about it, including Shopify’s Chief Marketing Officer. However, we learned that Shopify was building their own version of Shopiflip called [Shopify Exchange](#), which they launched a year and a half later. So when we realized Shopify was trying to do it themselves, we put a halt to it knowing we wouldn’t be able to compete with them.

The next idea came from my own need running Nadeef - recovering abandoned checkouts. I found that when I called a customer who abandoned their bidet checkout, I would recover like 55% of them (the industry standard of the auto-email cart reminder is just 10%). The problem for me was I would go hours, sometimes days, without checking my Shopify admin so I was missing my hottest leads. So, my friend and I hacked together a very basic Facebook Messenger bot that would simply alert me when someone abandoned their checkout. It would send me the customers details and a one-click button to make a phone call.

We named it [Scout](#), because it’s like a Scout that works for your store and is always on the lookout for your hottest leads. We have done well so far, and you can [download it on the Shopify App Store](#). We’ve had almost 5,000 Shopify merchants install Scout, and growing this business has become my main focus. It’s been growing more than 10% per week for the past 13

months (this time last year we had about 20 installs). About four months ago, I decided to quit my consulting job to focus on Scout full-time. I now have a team of four working on Scout, and we're looking at bringing on a fifth.

## What tools do you use for your business?

I use [Shopify](#) as I mentioned above. My favorite app, obviously is my own, Scout. It has helped me recover thousands of dollars per month in sales from recovering abandoned checkouts.

I believe 110% that as small retailers, our competitive advantage is owning our own customer relationship. With marketplaces like Etsy, Amazon, eBay, etc, you don't really own our own customer. Amazon sometimes won't even tell you who your customer is, which is crazy.

Scout enables us to leverage my most competitive advantage: my customer base. I can call, SMS, or send personal handwritten thank you cards to my customers through Scout. I can't count how many lessons about my own business I've learned through just having a phone call with my abandoned checkout customers. For example, I found that lots of customers were abandoning their checkout because they wanted a secondary product (a hot water connection) which they couldn't easily find on my site (It was there, just not easy to find). As soon as I heard this, I added a BIG RED button featuring the hot water connection, and quite literally overnight my order value increased by \$20. That would never have happened if I didn't talk to my customers.

For another example, it turns out lots of people had questions about how to install the bidet. After hearing this, I created a tutorial installation video and put it on the homepage and the product pages. Again, my conversions went up significantly. So again, Scout has enabled me to reach out and learn from my market.

I also made this whiteboard diagram to explain Scout more visually. If an abandoned checkout is your opponent, like an opposing football team, you need to have an answer for each player (abandonment reason) before they get too far down your end of the field. And having conversations with your customers makes these "opponents" visible. If you don't know what they are, how can you address them?

## **Advice for other entrepreneurs who want to get started or are just starting out?**

Your first business might not go well at all. And that's OK. The first one (and in my case, my first three) is a burner. You learn from it so that your next one is set up for success. I don't believe that the majority of us are even ready to handle success even if we got it on our first try.

A very close friend of mine got me hooked on etymology, which is the study of the origin of words. I looked into the word "travel" once and I found that it's influenced by the French word "travailler" which means "to work". So basically, it can be concluded that traveling used to be a form of "work." If you think about it, back in the day people would only travel if they really needed to, for work, for example, because it was a hard thing to do. No one traveled for fun. Traveling was hell.

So for example, if you wanted to be a dentist, and there wasn't a dentist in your village, you had to travel to the next village to become an apprentice for an established dentist. And if you got to that village and it turned out the master already had an apprentice or wasn't able to teach, then you'd have to travel again to another village. While traveling you would need to live in people's homes, offer to do work to earn your keep, etc. By the time you found a dentist able to take you on as an apprentice, you might have been traveling for months, an experience in itself of growth and maturity. And so reaching the master dentist was tough work. But going through that "travel" set you up for success. If you could survive through that journey and keep going, when you finally found a master to take you on, it would mean you were ready to learn and be successful as a dentist.

I think this lesson applies to entrepreneurs today. I think entrepreneurs are the real "travelers" of our day if you're basing it on the origin of the word's meaning. Your first few trials are like your first view villages you had to travel to. The fact that you failed means you're more ready to handle success and deal with success properly. If you had found the "village" on your first try after just a couple days of traveling, then you may not have experienced enough hardship to truly appreciate the opportunity and be mentally prepared to be a pro.

Failure comes in handy when you are starting to feel success. I think failure makes you humble. It brings you back to earth.

## **What are your favorite books that have helped you with your business?**

I don't think any single book has been a game changer. But, I am an avid reader. I think the real benefit of reading doesn't come from a finishing a book, but rather the practice of reading frequently. The benefits come from having collected many different ideas from many different authors and being able to put patterns together given your own context. I don't like when people say they read a book but didn't like it because "it wasn't relevant." Read the book,



digest it, and remix it with other ideas and context from other books, and I guarantee there was a golden nugget of information from that book.

## Where can we go to learn more?

- [Nadeef](#) and [Scout](#).
- I've [started a blog through Scout](#), where I write about customer relationship topics.
- Instagram: [@ahmiq](#)



Ahmad Iqbal, Founder of Nadeef Bidet



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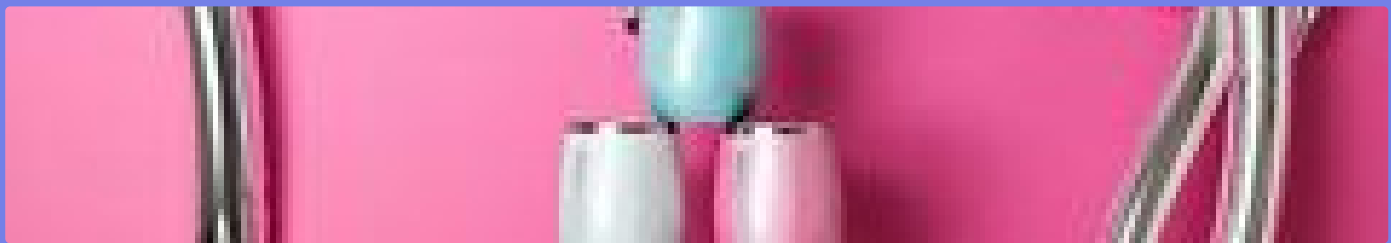
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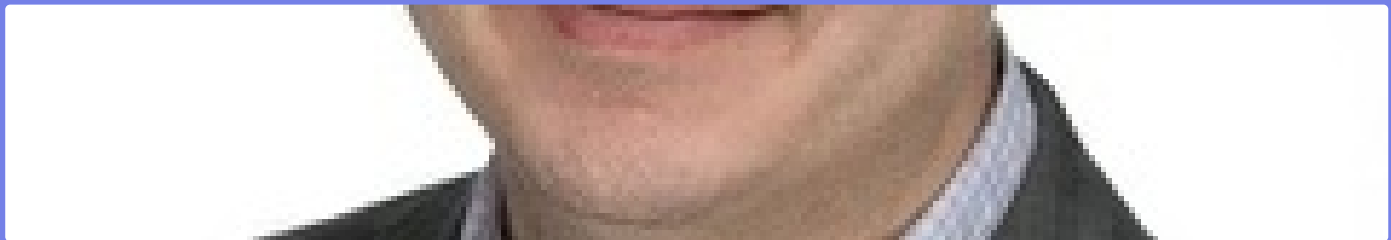
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