

PARTY GIRL



Packed Party Founder Jordan Jones proves that adding a few irresistibly delightful amusements—in the form of cocktail sippy cups, cupcake-flavored beauty products, festive themed gifts and a whole lot of confetti—can turn an everyday get-together into a celebration and make any hostess the life of the party.

BY CRYSTAL ZUZEK | PHOTOS BY ANNIE RAY
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SHOT ON LOCATION AT PLAYLAND SKATE CENTER





When Jordan Jones embarked on her life adventure in 2013, the Plano, Texas, native left behind her family and the one full-time job she'd had since graduating with a degree in journalism from Oklahoma State University the previous year. The self-described party girl, who was 23 at the time, yearned to live in San Francisco, and got her chance when she accepted a marketing job with a data-analytics company.

Optimistic and excited for what the future would hold, Jones, now the 28-year-old CEO of Austin-based lifestyle gifting service Packed Party, was unprepared for some of the harsh realities that often accompany life far from home.

"I really wanted to get to San Francisco," Jones says, "but the job wasn't in my wheelhouse at all. I was the Elle Woods of the office, and I stuck out like a sore thumb."

Her daily two-hour commute to Silicon Valley and the \$3,000 monthly rent payment that accompanied the 500-square-foot maids quarters she lived in made life challenging. Feeling low one evening, she called her mom to tell her she was bored at work and worried she'd made a mistake by moving to the West Coast. Her mother responded with some tough love.

"My mom said, 'You know what, Jordan? You're having a pity party. Go to bed,'" Jones remembers.

That night, she followed her mother's orders and had a vivid dream in which she sent herself a "pity-party package."

"When I woke up, I sat straight up in bed and wrote all my notes in my phone," Jones says, adding that she had a clear image of her business logo and wanted the concept to revolve around subscription-free, party-for-one boxes containing experiential party goods.

In the fall of 2013, without any business experience or a mentor to guide her, Jones took a leap of faith and followed her dream. Packed Party was born.

"The way it happened was kind of magical," Jones says. "I had a dream, and it sparked my journey to create Packed Party."

The company sells fun, modern-day, curated gift packages that bring the party right to your door. Wrapped in a chic navy box, each package is filled with luxe novelty items that tie into a theme. For example, the Birthday Beb package includes items like cupcake-scented lotion, birthday confetti candy, birthday-cake lip scrub and a Make a Wish trinket tray. (According to the Packed Party website, a "beb" is a "better version of a babe," and a birthday beb "deserves all the attention!")

In 2016, Jones moved the Packed Party headquarters to Austin. While party packages are still signature items for sale on the website, the product line has grown to include kitschy doormats, travel cups, drink sleeves and plenty more party-ready accoutrements.

Today, the fearless, intuition-driven business owner employs 10 people out of her pet-friendly North Austin office. Under Jones' leadership, Packed Party has flourished and sells consumer goods to more than 4,000 stores, including retail heavyweights Neiman Marcus and Dillard's.

GET THIS PARTY STARTED

Packed Party began as a side hustle for Jones, who initially sold five themed party packages at \$45 each, available online and shipped from her mom's garage in Texas. As she was getting the business off the ground, Jones employed some unconventional marketing tactics. To spread the word about her fledgling business, she wrote a *BuzzFeed* article and posted it on the site's community section. The story went viral. Next thing she knew, a writer at the *San Francisco Chronicle* wanted to tell her story.

"The day the article came out, I was fired from my full-time job because I was incubating on another idea," Jones says.

Rather than let that setback derail her, she hit the job search hard. She eventually landed at a corporate-recruitment firm, where she scouted personal assistants. The job allowed her to pay rent and still have time to devote to Packed Party. Knowing she needed to make a big splash but lacking any marketing dollars, Jones started the Packed Party blog.

"I didn't focus on funding but on building the brand. I wanted to provide my customers with a solution," she says.

The blog led to a partnership with fashion designer Rebecca Minkoff, who offered a custom Packed Party gift with purchase in her New York and San Francisco boutiques as part of a kickoff promotion for Coachella. Customers received a miniature version of a Packed Party package that contained items like facial mist and hair feathers. The marketing move exposed Jones' business to East Coast media, including the women behind Betches Media, originally called Betches Love This.

Jones curated a custom package for Betches Love This that sold out instantly. Overnight, she gained 20,000 new Instagram followers. Shortly thereafter, Reese Witherspoon got wind of Packed Party. The actress' brand, Draper James, partnered with Jones to sell a Thanks a Brunch custom package.

By this time in 2015, Packed Party offered direct-to-consumer products sold exclusively through the company's website, *packedparty.com*. Jones hadn't shelled out any money for advertising or marketing, yet investors started showing interest in the company.

"I had brand awareness and was finally making money," Jones says, adding that she was able to secure an investor based in Houston.

Page 53: Solid & Striped Anne-Marie one-piece swimsuit, \$168, available at ByGeorge, 524 N. Lamar Blvd., 512.472.5951, bygeorgeaustin.com. Just Black high-rise, slit flare jeans, \$85, available at Beehive, 3300 Bee Caves Road, 512.347.0800, lovebeehive.com. Scarf, stylist's own.

Page 54: Yellow floral dress, \$85, available at Beehive, 3300 Bee Caves Road, 512.347.0800, lovebeehive.com. Party Don't Stop headband, available at packedparty.com.

Page 57: Shaina Mote Lua top, \$330; vintage suede vest set (not shown: matching skirt), \$56, available at Olive, 1200 E. 11th St., 512.522.9462, shopolive.us. Jesse Kamm sailor pants, \$395, available at Kick Pleat, 624 N. Lamar Blvd., 512.445.4500, kickpleat.com. Packed Party Doorstep necklace, \$98, available at packedparty.com. Alliewatch x Eythink Multitudes hoop earrings, \$24, available at eythink.com.

BREAK OUT THE CONFETTI

With financing in hand, Jones quit her headhunting job and opened her first Packed Party office in an old Victorian house overlooking the Golden Gate Bridge.

“I was growing this cult, loyal following, this community of party girls,” Jones says. “The brand partnerships resonated with them, and they felt included in what I was creating.”

The young CEO knows how to preach the party-girl gospel on social media and how to speak to her fellow millennials.

“That 23- to 35-year-old female customer base is our sweet spot,” she says. “That’s who heavily uses social media. We’re a digitally native brand, so people find us through social media and bloggers. People become obsessed, tag their friends and then the snowball is rolling.”

And Jones unabashedly invites her customers to share the party on social media. Her effective marketing efforts have been pivotal to the brand loyalty Packed Party has achieved. The business has garnered more than 84,000 Instagram followers, nearly 13,000 Facebook followers and 4,000-plus Twitter followers.

With the business growing, Jones decided it was time to start designing her own Packed Party products. Her first offering—a 24-karat-gold-dipped Doorstep necklace that’s engraved with the customer’s house number—was popular but pricey at \$98. In her quest for a more affordable product with mass appeal, Jones dreamed up the Disco Drink, a plastic, reflective and dazzling mirror-ball cup with a twist-off top and pink straw. Jones calls the launch of the Disco Drink in late 2015 a “game changer” for Packed Party. The product was a hit and even made an appearance in the hands of *Today Show* personalities Hoda Kotb and Jenna Bush.

“The Disco Drink was the first product we manufactured ourselves, and it allowed us to expand our business into wholesale,” Jones says, adding that gift retailer Paper Source was her first wholesale customer. “From there, I could get the product into more hands quickly and grow brand awareness in an even bigger way.”

PARTY ON

Jones has lofty goals for the upscale gifting empire she’s building. Her plans involve securing international distribution, finding another investor, expanding the product line and experimenting with pop-up events in Austin.

“People contact us every week wanting to come to our office to buy products. We always send them to our retailers, but I would love to fill that niche in Austin with pop-up events,” she says.

As she reflects on how much she has accomplished in such a short time, Jones is grateful for the support she has received from family, friends and colleagues. Her father even serves on her board of directors.

“I wouldn’t be where I am without my team,” Jones says. “I love sharing the company’s success with them.”





FIVE WAYS JORDAN JONES STRIKES WORK/LIFE BALANCE

- **Journal.** Keep a journal to document growing pains, wins and what's happening in your business. Hold on to every journal to look back on what you've been through and how far you've come.
- **Say no.** Learn to say no to things that do not work with your schedule. If a young professional asks Jordan Jones to coffee and she can't make it, she asks that person to listen to one of her recorded podcasts for advice and guidance. packedparty.com/podcast
- **Unplug.** Set aside time that doesn't involve work and that allows you to disconnect. Jones goes on a lot of walks with her Bernese mountain dog, Truman, Packed Party's resident party animal.
- **Meditate.** Jones says she's still working on meditating regularly but finds peace in being still and quiet.
- **Exercise.** Take time to step away from the office and breathe. Jones schedules a lot of walking meetings outdoors.

To see Jordan Jones' Top Five Tips for Building a Brand, visit atxwoman.com.

PLAYLAND SKATE CENTER

Playland Skate Center offers the finest in skating entertainment, with an impressive light show, fog machine and state-of-the-art sound system playing a wide variety of music. Its extra-large skating facility, at 27,500 square feet, is Austin's largest. Playland Skate Center has been in business since 1973, offering children and adults a safe, fun, clean and entertaining roller-skating experience.

The mission of Playland Skate Center is to provide family-oriented entertainment that entices customers to enjoy its affordable, safe skating environment. Playland offers excellent customer service, quality skates to customers and gives back to the community. Playland wants all its customers, regardless of whether they are actually skating, to have fun and enjoy themselves while at the facility.

8822 McCann Drive, 512.452.1901
playlandskatecenter.net



Zadig & Voltaire Ruby graphic crewneck T-shirt, \$118; A.O.L.A. Gorgeous high-rise, wide-leg jeans with rainbow back pockets, \$350, available at Neiman Marcus, 3400 Palm Way, 512.719.1200, neimanmarcus.com. Berry drop earrings, \$32, available at Beehive, 3300 Bee Caves Road, 512.347.0800, lovebeehive.com. Packed Party roller-skate drink sleeve, \$9.95, available at packedparty.com.