

# Angela Kelly Smith

## How I Got Started as a Squarespace Website Designer Brand + Design Scoop ep. 001 Podcast Transcript

Welcome to Brand + Design Scoop, where I share practical, relatable tips on branding, design and building a business for sole proprietors.

I'm Kelly, a brand strategist and Squarespace website designer and founder of AKS Design Studio.

For this first podcast, I'd like to share the story of how I got started in my business as a Squarespace website designer. I've had a long career as a freelancer. I started out more than 20 years ago as a marketing consultant. I created branding and marketing plans for such clients as Rice University Business School, and IDENTIGENE, a DNA testing company in Houston. They started out using the tagline "Who's the Daddy." It was fantastic.

Later, I was a business and life coach for eight years. I was a brand consultant, and Director of Brand for a company called Tin Drum. They make content for wearable augmented reality headset devices. Their first piece is called "The Life," by performance artist Marina Abramovic. It premiered at the Serpentine Gallery in London in 2019. I helped create the marketing strategy for the company and the social media strategy for that piece.

I'm also a professional artist. Since 1999, I've had five solo exhibitions. I've been in numerous group shows. I did a collaboration with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and the Attack Theater dance company. And my short film *Dotted Lines* was in the 2003 Three Rivers Film Festival.

I acted as a co-producer on the BAFTA-Award-winning film *Control*, about Joy Division lead singer Ian Curtis. And I'm the assistant editor on a feature length documentary that's an official selection in the Montreal Film Festival.

Phew!

So, how did I get into website design?

During my time as a consultant, coach, and artist, I created my own websites. And I ended up creating websites for clients. I never advertised my website services separately. I just did it on

the side for some clients who asked for it after seeing my websites. Honestly, I gave them a deal because I just loved making websites. These were sole proprietors just getting started. They were having problems with their websites, and they didn't have much money to spend. I know a big mistake to undercut my services. No more discounts.

As if all of this work history isn't enough, I'm also a co-host of The Geek Girl suit podcast. Now, that doesn't pay anything. I recently created a whole new website for us, moving us from Blogger to Squarespace and transferring more than 450 podcast episodes by hand. It took weeks, but it was so much fun. And so worth it. We're really happy with the new website. And, as a result of that, I got a gig to create a website for a high-profile football player, former football player, who's starting a podcast. I can't share that yet, since that project is still ongoing!

It [creating these websites] started out just as a fun side project. But then I was like, "Wait a minute, why not do this for real?" And that's how AKS Design Studio was born. If I can get a high-profile client like this from word of mouth, then maybe I can get more gigs through my website, social media, and more word of mouth.

This business is new, but I'm not new to business website design or marketing.

In 2019, I got a master's degree in communication from Johns Hopkins University, specializing in marketing and branding. I was working for Tin Drum while I was in school. Then I stopped pursuing clients when lockdowns started. Then I just sort of got lazy until I decided to create the new website for Geek Girl Soup. That jump started my entrepreneurial engine. And now I'm back.

But I had to make some changes to get my new business going. My most recent old website was for my consulting business. That wouldn't do anymore. I needed a whole new website for AKS Design Studio. I needed new copy, design-package pricing, and samples of my work.

That was a bit of a problem. Since I wasn't creating websites in an official capacity in the past, I never saved screenshots of the sites that I designed. I also didn't save screenshots of my own sites. In fact, I deleted them as fast as I could. Whenever I redid my own sites, I wanted to forget the old site quickly. I had outgrown it. So why would I want to remember it?

All of this is a problem now because clients want to see samples of my work, I'm going to have to find several small plot projects to do quickly to boost my portfolio. And the football player project will certainly help.

Aside from the website, I also had to create a fictitious name for my business. I already use Angela Kelly Smith for my artists website. And I didn't want to use that for my website design business because I thought it would be confusing. So, I came up with AKS Design Studio. It's a bit artsy and has me in there. I filed that with the State of Pennsylvania to make it official. I wrote up a contract and created a questionnaire for new clients, set up invoicing and client

statements, got a business checking account and hooked it up to PayPal for billing. I also ordered some business cards even though everything is done online these days. You never know who I might run into in person! My past experience in business made this straightforward and fairly easy.

Why am I doing this podcast? I wasn't planning on doing a podcast first—just a blog because I love writing, and blogs help boost your SEO ranking. But then I was writing an article about starting a podcast, why my clients should consider starting a podcast. Podcasts also help boost your SEO ranking. Podcasts are a good way to boost your brand. And they help engage your audience. While writing the article, I convinced myself to start my own podcast! Plus, I like talking—as if I don't do enough of that already a Geek Girl Soup!

So there you have it. I'm glad you're here, and I hope you'll continue this journey with me.

I'll be back with more branding, design, and business tips. I'll also have guests on in the future with their own insider tips and tricks.

That's it for today. See you next time on Brand + Design Scoop!

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Angela Kelly Smith provides custom Squarespace websites, branding strategy, and marketing instruction so freelancers and entrepreneurs can run a successful business while spending more time focusing on the work they really love doing. Check out her [website design + marketing strategy services](#).