

BUSINESS PLAN

Emberwick Candle Co.

Etsy Shop · Asheville, North Carolina

PREPARED BY

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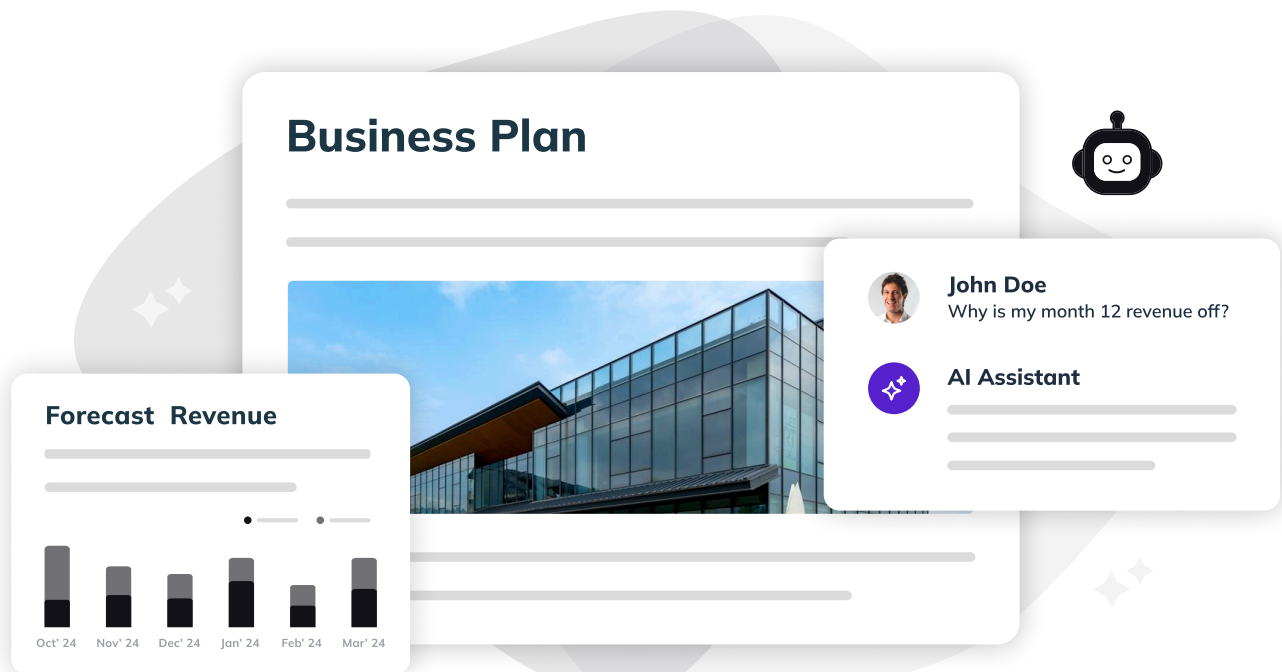
11. References

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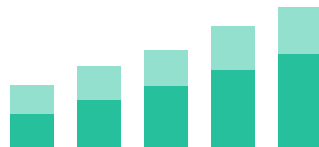
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Executive Summary

- 1.1 Business Overview
- 1.2 Mission Statement
- 1.3 Market Opportunity
- 1.4 Unique Selling Points
- 1.5 Financial Highlights
- 1.6 Funding Requirement

1.1 Business Overview

Emberwick Candle Co. is a handmade home fragrance shop opening in Asheville, North Carolina, and selling through Etsy to buyers across the United States. Its two founders hand-pour soy wax candles in small batches and make reed diffusers in the same scents, then pack and ship every order from their own studio.

The shop sells candles in three sizes, diffusers with refill bottles, and gift sets that pair the two. Its buyers are people shopping for a gift or for their own home, most of them in the weeks before the holidays, a birthday, a housewarming or Mother's Day.



1.2 Mission Statement

To make candles and diffusers that are tested before they are sold, smell the same in every room of the house, and arrive in one piece, ready to give.

1.3 Market Opportunity

Etsy is where buyers go looking for handmade goods, and it is a large market in its own right: buyers in the United States bought about \$7.74 billion of goods on the Etsy marketplace in 2025. Home and living is the first of the six categories that make up most of that spending, and candles are bought as gifts for the holidays, housewarmings and thank-yous throughout the year.

Asheville is where the studio sits, not where the customers are. Etsy search sends buyers from every state, so the shop's market is national from the first day. The city gives the founders an affordable studio, a long tradition of craft, and a local hourly labor market to hire a packer from. A single owner-run maker in this part of manufacturing takes in about \$103,600 a year, which is the scale Emberwick plans to reach and pass in its first year.

1.4 Unique Selling Points

- Every candle scent is also made as a reed diffuser, so a buyer can scent two rooms the same way or give a matched pair.
- Diffuser refills bring buyers back every two to three months without buying the glass again.
- Each scent, vessel and wick pairing is burn tested to the end of the jar before it is listed.
- Packaging is built around the postage tiers so domestic shipping stays under \$6.
- Every order ships in a gift box with an optional handwritten note.

1.5 Financial Highlights

Revenue comes from visits to the Etsy shop, the share of those visits that order, and the value of each order, with a small wholesale line to boutiques adding to it. At full run rate the shop expects 9,000 visits a month, a conversion rate of 2.6% and an average order of \$46. It opens at half that level while its first reviews build and reaches full run rate within six months.

Revenue is projected at \$126,585 in the first year, \$151,902 in the second and \$182,282 in the third, at a gross margin of 60.0% throughout. The shop is profitable from the first year: net income is \$5,601, then \$9,946, then \$15,115. Break-even revenue is \$102,661, or 2,232 orders a year, which the first year clears.

1.6 Funding Requirement

The startup budget is \$29,200. It buys the pouring equipment and studio fit-out, the first inventory of wax, fragrance, vessels and packaging, burn testing, product photography, branding, insurance and launch marketing, and keeps a cash reserve for the first months. It is funded by \$25,000 from the two founders and a \$15,000 SBA Microloan at 9.5% over five years. Profits stay in the business for the first three years to pay for inventory and new scents.

The plan rests on a product line built and tested before launch, a marketplace where buyers already go looking for handmade gifts, and a matched candle and diffuser offer that brings buyers back. The money opens a working studio and carries the shop to the point where it pays its own way.

1.6.1 Income Statement (3 Year projections)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Revenue	\$126,584.64	\$151,901.57	\$182,281.88	\$460,768.09
Cost of Sales	\$50,633.86	\$60,760.63	\$72,912.75	\$184,307.24
Gross Margin	\$75,950.78	\$91,140.94	\$109,369.13	\$276,460.85
Operating Expense	\$61,596.32	\$70,963.59	\$82,204.30	\$214,764.21
Total Expense	\$120,983.97	\$141,955.68	\$167,166.73	\$430,106.38
Net Income	\$5,600.67	\$9,945.89	\$15,115.15	\$30,661.71



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Company Overview

2.1 Legal Structure

2.2 Vision Statement

2.3 Background & History

2.4 Future Goals

2.1 Legal Structure

Emberwick Candle Co. will be organized as a North Carolina limited liability company owned by its two founders, with Maren Ashby as managing member. The LLC keeps the founders' personal assets separate from the business, which matters for a company that sells a product with an open flame, and it lets profits pass through to the owners' own tax returns. The company carries product liability and studio contents insurance from the day the first candle is sold.

The shop trades on Etsy under the Emberwick Candle Co. name, and wholesale accounts are invoiced by the LLC directly. Sales tax on Etsy orders is collected and remitted by Etsy as the marketplace facilitator; the company registers to collect it on any wholesale and in-person sales that require it.

2.2 Vision Statement

To be the handmade fragrance shop a buyer returns to every season: for a candle to give, a diffuser for a room that needs one, and a refill for the scent they already love.

2.3 Background & History

Emberwick is a new business and has not yet made a sale. It grew out of Maren Ashby's six years of pouring candles for craft markets, friends and family, during which she built the scent library and the burn-testing routine the shop will open with. The diffusers came from a request she heard often at those markets: buyers wanted the same scent in a room where they could not leave a flame burning.

Caleb Ostrander joins her as co-founder after eight years running listings, shipping and customer service for an outdoor gear retailer's online store. The founders chose Etsy because its buyers already search for handmade, small-batch goods, so the shop can reach a national audience without first building one, and they chose Asheville because they live there and can rent a small studio at a cost a two-person business can carry.

Before launch, the founders will have tested every scent, vessel and wick pairing to the end of the jar, fixed the packaging so domestic shipping stays under \$6, and photographed every listing in the studio.

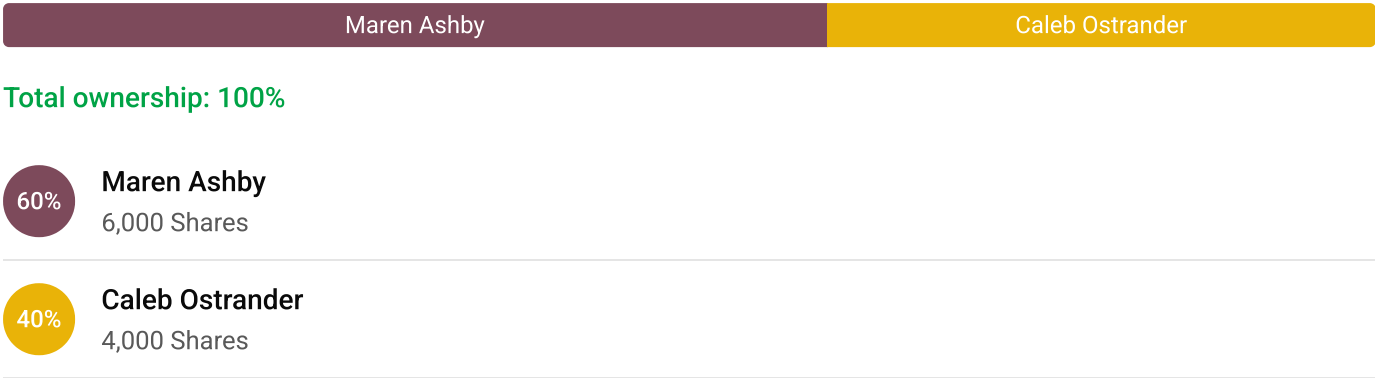
2.4 Future Goals

In the first 0 to 18 months, the goal is to open the Etsy shop, earn its first reviews, and get through the first holiday season with every order shipped within two days. That means reaching the break-even level of 2,232 orders a year inside the first year, hiring a part-time packer before the holidays, and opening a small wholesale line to boutiques and gift shops.

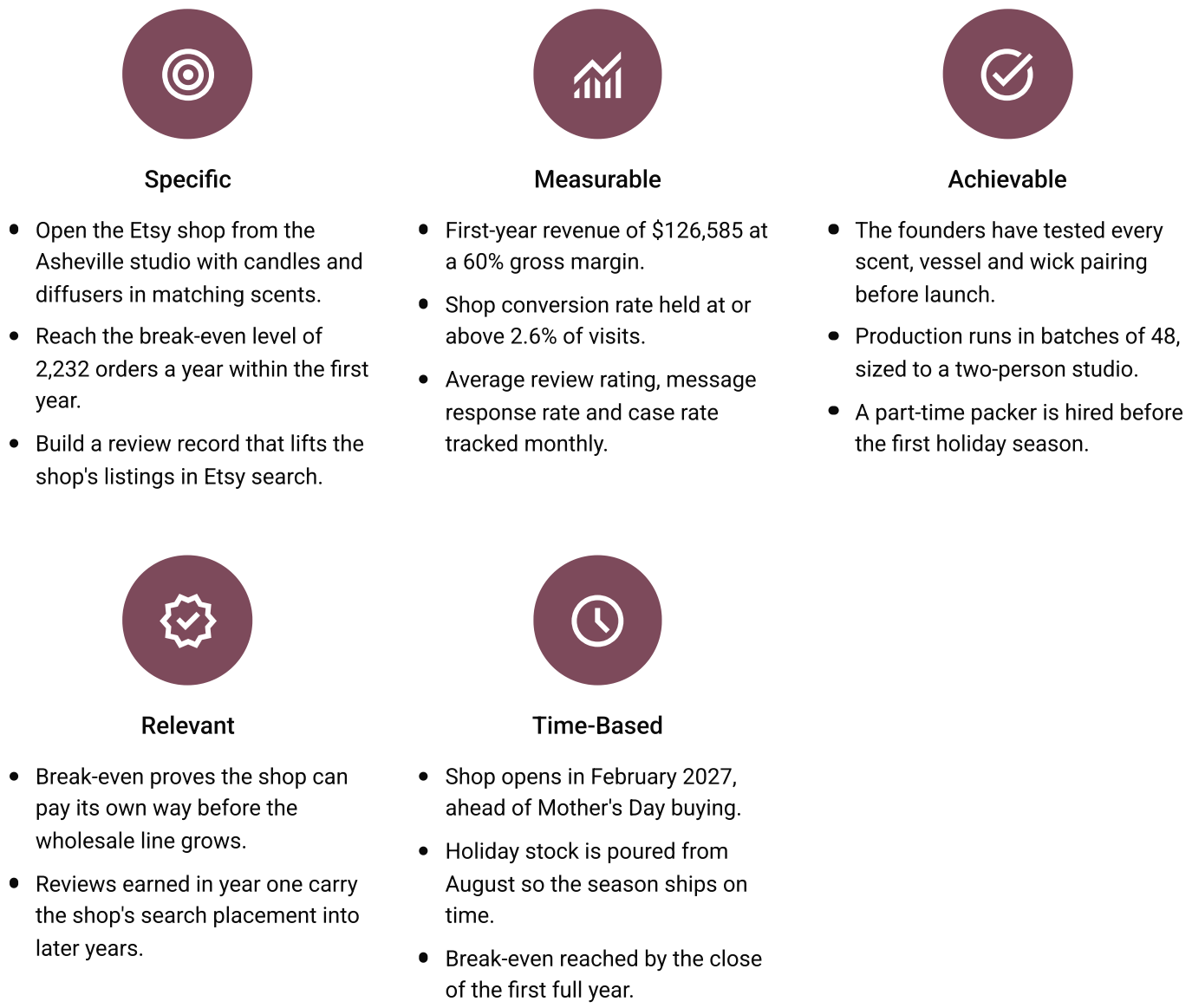
Over 1 to 3 years, the shop grows revenue from \$126,585 in the first year to \$182,282 in the third, as new seasonal scents, a growing review count and diffuser refills bring buyers back. Wholesale accounts and custom gift orders take a larger share, so the business depends less on Etsy search alone.

Over 3 to 5 years, the founders intend to open a direct web shop alongside Etsy for returning buyers, add a second studio employee, and build a standing wholesale list of boutiques across the Southeast.

2.4.1 Business Owners



2.4.2 SMART Goal



Market Analysis

3.1 Overview

3.2 Market Segmentation

3.3 Market Trends

3.4 Market Size

3.1 Overview

Etsy is a marketplace for handmade, vintage and craft goods. In 2025 it carried \$10,460.7 million of gross merchandise sales, from 86.5 million active buyers who each spent \$121 over the year on average. Fourth-quarter sales were flat against the year before, up 0.1%, while the number of active buyers fell 3.4%, so the marketplace is mature rather than growing quickly, and a new shop wins its sales from other sellers rather than from new buyers arriving.

Most of that spending is domestic: 74% of Etsy marketplace sales came from buyers in the United States in 2025. A shop selling from Asheville ships almost entirely to that national audience.

3.2 Market Segmentation

Etsy's buyers split by why they are buying, which decides what they look for in a listing:

- **Gift buyers:** shopping for someone else, often on a deadline, and paying close attention to packaging, delivery dates and reviews.
- **Home buyers:** scenting their own rooms, more likely to return for a favorite scent or a diffuser refill.
- **Occasion buyers:** ordering favors or gifts in quantity for a wedding, a shower or a client list, booked weeks ahead.
- **Trade buyers:** boutiques and gift shops buying at wholesale to resell, mostly ahead of the holiday season.

The handmade market has no single published size outside Etsy's own figures. IBISWorld puts the adjacent online market for hobby and craft supplies at \$25.3 billion in 2026, but that measures the materials makers buy, not the finished goods they sell.

3.3 Market Trends

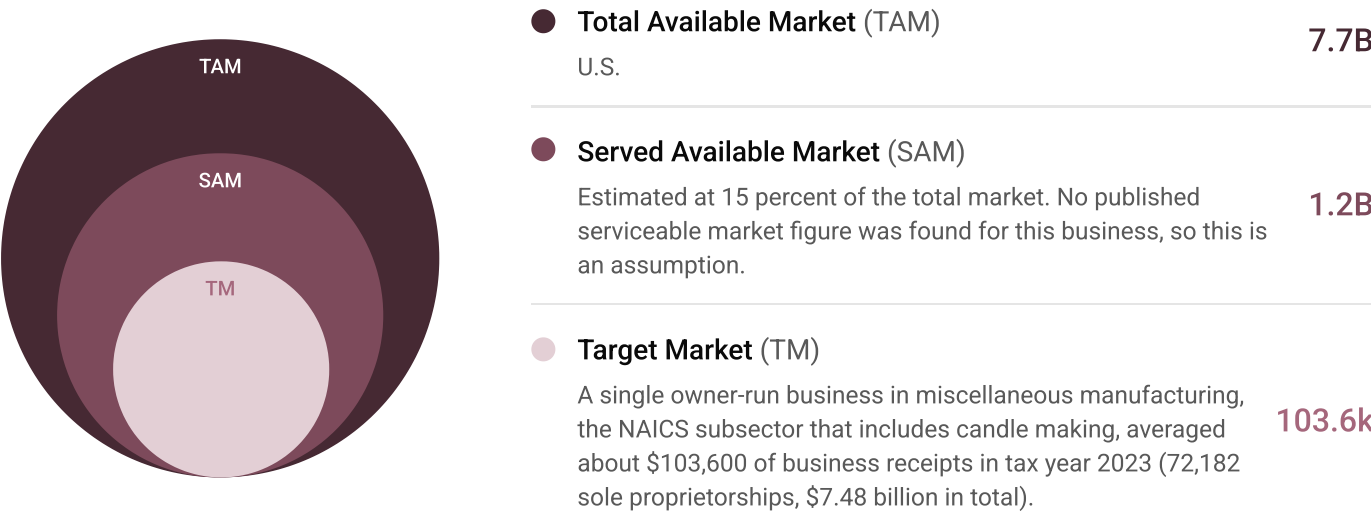
- Online keeps taking share of retail: e-commerce was 17.1% of U.S. retail sales in the second quarter of 2026, up from 16.3% a year earlier.
- Buying has moved to the phone, so listing photographs are judged at small size first.
- Etsy ranks listings partly on a shop's review rating, message response rate and case rate over the past three months, which rewards careful packing and fast replies.
- Seller costs are rising: Etsy's transaction fee is 6.5% of the item price plus shipping, and payment processing adds 3% plus \$0.25 an order.

3.4 Market Size

The total addressable market is what U.S. buyers spend on the Etsy marketplace: about \$7,741,000,000 in 2025, which is 74% of Etsy's \$10,460.7 million of marketplace sales. Every Etsy shop competes for a share of it.

The serviceable market is the part of that spending a home fragrance shop can reach. Etsy names home and living as the first of its six largest categories but does not report it separately, so no researched figure exists. This plan therefore uses an estimate of 15% of the total, \$1,161,150,000, and states it as an assumption rather than a finding.

The obtainable market is sized at the scale of one business: a single owner-run maker in miscellaneous manufacturing, the part of the economy that includes candle making, took in about \$103,600 in tax year 2023. Emberwick's first-year projection of \$126,585 sits a little above that average, which is what a two-founder studio with a second product line should be able to reach.



3.4.1 PESTEL Analysis

Political

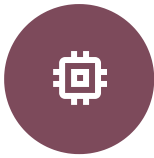
- Tariffs on imported glass and ceramic vessels raise the cost of the shop's largest packaging input.
- Etsy collects and remits sales tax as marketplace facilitator in the states that require it.
- SBA Microloan lending supports owner-run startups of this size.

Economic

- Candles are a discretionary purchase, so demand softens when household budgets tighten.
- Holiday spending grew 4.1% in 2025, and the shop's sales lean on that season.
- E-commerce keeps taking share of retail, at 17.1% of sales in mid-2026.

Social

- Buyers on Etsy look for handmade, small-batch goods and the story of the maker.
- Candles are a habitual gift for holidays, housewarmings and thank-yous.
- Interest in natural waxes and phthalate-free fragrance favors a soy-based line.



Technological

- Close to half of Etsy buying happens in its mobile app, so listing photos must read on a phone.
- Etsy search ranks listings on relevancy, quality, engagement and customer service signals.
- Shipping label software lets a small shop buy commercial postage rates.



Environmental

- Soy wax is renewable and vessels are designed to be reused once the candle is finished.
- Recyclable paper packaging replaces plastic fill in every parcel.
- Studio placement away from Asheville's flood-exposed riverside reflects the 2024 Helene flooding.



Legal

- Wicks must keep lead in any metal core under 0.06% by weight; Emberwick uses cotton and wood wicks.
- Every candle carries a fire safety warning label following ASTM F2058.
- Etsy's seller policies govern listings, fees, reviews and dispute cases.



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Customer Analysis

4.1 Target Market

4.2 Customer Segments

4.3 Customer Persona

4.4 Customer Purchase Journey

4.1 Target Market

Emberwick sells to people across the United States who buy home fragrance on Etsy, either as a gift or for their own rooms. They come to Etsy because they want something made by a person rather than a factory, and they are willing to pay more for it than for a candle in a supermarket aisle, provided the listing shows them what they will get and the reviews tell them it arrives intact.

The audience is large and settled. The Etsy marketplace had 86.5 million active buyers at the end of 2025, each spending \$121 over the year on average, and 74% of the marketplace's sales came from buyers in the United States. The shop does not need to persuade anyone to shop on Etsy; it needs to be found and chosen among the shops a buyer already sees there.

4.2 Customer Segments

- Gift buyers are the largest group. They buy one candle or a candle and diffuser set, care most about packaging and delivery dates, and concentrate their orders in November and December and around Mother's Day.
- Home buyers scent their own rooms. They buy a diffuser alongside a candle more often than gift buyers do, return for refills, and are the group the seasonal scent releases are aimed at.
- Occasion buyers order in quantity for a wedding, a shower, a housewarming party or a client list. Their orders are larger and booked weeks ahead through custom listings.
- Trade buyers are boutiques and gift shops buying a curated set of scents at wholesale to resell, mostly in late summer and early autumn.

The segments differ most in when they buy and what they ask of the shop. Gift buyers arrive in waves, and a gift bought in the second week of December has to arrive before the holiday, so for them the delivery date shown at checkout is part of the product. Home buyers arrive steadily through the year and judge the shop on whether the scent they liked last time is still there. Occasion buyers message before they order, with a date, a quantity and a label to approve, and they decide on how quickly and clearly the shop replies. Trade buyers want consistency above all: the same scent, the same jar and the same label on every reorder.

The persona below stands for the first group, because gift buyers carry the most orders and set the standard the shop's packing and shipping have to meet.

4.3 Customer Persona



Hannah, the Thoughtful Gifter

Demographics

Age: 34

Status: Married, one child

Location: Columbus, OH

Income: \$78,000 a year

Professional Role

Education: Bachelor's in Nursing

Job: Pediatric nurse on rotating shifts

"I want a gift that looks like someone made it, smells like a real place, and arrives in a box I don't have to rewrap."



Identifiers / Personality Traits

- Shops on the Etsy app in short breaks between shifts
- Buys six to eight gifts a year for family, friends and colleagues
- Reads reviews and looks at buyer photos before ordering



Goals

- Find gifts that feel personal without hours of searching
- Have orders arrive on time and ready to give
- Keep a favorite scent going at home through the year



Challenges

- Little time to compare dozens of similar listings
- Has received candles that tunnelled or arrived cracked
- Shipping costs that make a small gift feel overpriced

4.4 Customer Purchase Journey

Most buyers start with a search in the Etsy app, typing a scent or an occasion such as "cedar candle gift" or "housewarming candle". Etsy matches the query against listing titles, tags, categories and attributes, then orders the results by relevance, listing quality, engagement and the shop's customer service record. A listing that is not tagged for the words buyers use is never shown at all.

- **Discover:** the buyer scrolls search results on a phone, so the first photograph decides whether the listing is opened.
- **Compare:** the buyer reads reviews, looks at buyer photos and checks the shipping price and delivery date.
- **Choose:** the buyer picks a scent and size, often adding a matching diffuser or choosing the gift set, and adds a gift note.
- **Receive:** the order arrives in a gift box within the promised window, which is when a review is left.
- **Return:** a follow-up message and a seasonal release bring the buyer back for a refill or a new scent.

Each review feeds the shop's rating, and Etsy uses the rating, message response rate and case rate from the past three months in search ranking. The way the shop treats one buyer therefore decides how often it is found by the next.

Competitive Analysis

5.1 Competitors

5.2 Comparison

5.3 Competitive Edge

5.4 SWOT Analysis

5.1 Competitors

Emberwick competes for the same buyer in three places, and only the first is a direct contest.

- **Other handmade Etsy candle shops.** The closest rivals, shown on the same search results page for the same query. Many are run by one person from home, and few sell a second product line in matching scents.
- **Mass-market candle brands.** Lower prices, national advertising and wide distribution, and a buyer who wants a familiar scent at the lowest price goes to them first.
- **Big-box home goods stores.** A candle bought on impulse in an aisle, cheap and immediate, but with nothing handmade or personal about it.

The handmade field is crowded and fragmented. The Etsy marketplace had 5.6 million active sellers at the end of 2025 sharing \$10,460.7 million of sales, an average of under \$2,000 each, so the typical shop is very small and many sell as a sideline. That cuts both ways: there are many shops in every search, but few that run as a business with tested products, consistent packaging and replies within hours.

On Etsy, competition is decided by search placement more than by price. Etsy ranks matching listings on relevance, listing quality, engagement, recency, shopper habits and the shop's customer service record. A new shop with no reviews starts behind established ones on several of those signals at once.

5.2 Comparison

Against other handmade shops, Emberwick's difference is the second product and the refill: buyers can match a candle with a diffuser in the same scent and keep the diffuser going. Against the mass-market brands and big-box stores it does not try to compete on price or availability; it competes on what a handmade shop can offer and a factory line cannot, which is small-batch scents, a personal note and makers who answer every message themselves.

Fees set a floor under price for every Etsy seller alike. A U.S. shop pays a 6.5% transaction fee on the item price and shipping, payment processing of 3% plus \$0.25 an order, and, on orders that come from Etsy's own offsite advertising, a further 15% below \$10,000 of annual sales and 12% above it. A shop that prices to undercut its neighbors on Etsy gives away margin it cannot get back.

Feature	Emberwick Candle Co.	Other handmade Etsy candle shops	Mass-market candle brands	Big-box home goods stores
Hand-poured in small batches	✓	✓	✗	✗
Matching candle and diffuser scents	✓	✗	✓	✗
Diffuser refills sold separately	✓	✗	✓	✗

Feature	Emberwick Candle Co.	Other handmade Etsy candle shops	Mass-market candle brands	Big-box home goods stores
Natural soy wax	✓	✓	✗	✗
Personal gift note on every order	✓	✓	✗	✗
Stocked in physical stores nationwide	✗	✗	✓	✓

5.3 Competitive Edge

None of the shop's advantages is hard to copy on its own; any maker could add a diffuser or test a wick. The edge is in doing all of them from the first order, while most shops in the same search do none, and in holding them through the holiday weeks when volume doubles and corners get cut. It is measured where Etsy measures it: an average review rating, a message response rate and a case rate that keep the shop's listings near the top of the page.

What would erode it is just as clear. A batch that tunnels, a parcel that arrives cracked or a message left unanswered over a holiday weekend shows up in the next three months of search placement, so the edge has to be defended at the packing bench as much as in the listing.

- 

Candle and diffuser in one scent
Most handmade candle shops sell candles alone. Selling a matching diffuser lifts the order value and covers rooms where a flame does not suit.
- 

A refill that brings buyers back
The diffuser refill gives a buyer a reason to return every few months, which a candle shop with no consumable cannot offer.
- 

Burn tested before listing
Every scent, vessel and wick pairing is burned to the end of the jar before sale, which keeps tunnelling and soot complaints out of the reviews Etsy ranks on.
- 

Holiday stock built in advance
Small batches poured from late summer mean the shop can ship within two days through the holiday weeks when a third of candle sales happen.
- 

Shipping held under \$6
Packaging is designed around the postage tiers so domestic shipping stays below the threshold Etsy uses to prioritize listings in search.

5.4 SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Matching candle and diffuser scents raise the order value above a candle-only shop.
- Diffuser refills create a repeat purchase every two to three months.
- Small batches let a new scent be tested and listed within weeks.
- Low fixed costs: a 500 square foot studio and two founders doing most of the work.

Weaknesses

- A new shop starts with no reviews, and Etsy ranks listings partly on review rating.
- Nearly all revenue depends on one marketplace and its fee and search rules.
- Glass vessels add weight and breakage risk to every parcel.
- Two founders carry production, listings and customer messages until a packer is hired.

Opportunities

- About 35% of candle sales fall in the holiday season, when gift buying peaks.
- Candles are a common housewarming, hostess and thank-you gift all year round.
- Boutiques and gift shops buy wholesale from small makers with a consistent look.
- Custom favors for weddings and showers bring larger single orders.

Threats

- Etsy can raise fees or change search ranking at any time.
- Millions of active sellers compete for the same buyers in Etsy search.
- Postage increases, such as the 2026 temporary surcharge, squeeze margin on low-priced orders.
- Mass-market candle brands sell at lower prices in stores and online.

✦ Strategic Summary

Emberwick should compete on the matched pair and the refill, not on price, and earn reviews fast through tested products and careful packing. Wholesale and custom orders then reduce how much rests on Etsy search.



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Products & Services

6.1 Our Offering

6.2 Signature Items

6.3 Additional Services

6.4 What Sets Us Apart

6.5 Materials Sourcing & Product Safety

6.1 Our Offering



Emberwick makes home fragrance in two forms from one scent library: hand-poured soy candles and reed diffusers. Every scent the shop sells is available as both, so a buyer can light a candle in the living room and keep a diffuser running in the hallway or the bathroom, where a flame does not suit, and the two rooms smell the same.

The shop opens with twelve scents built around seasons and rooms rather than around desserts or brand names: cedar and smoked vanilla for winter evenings, fig leaf and black tea for a kitchen, salt air

and vetiver for a bathroom. Three new scents arrive each season and the weakest sellers retire, so the library stays at a size the studio can pour in small batches and keep fresh.

6.2 Signature Items

The candles are the headline product and most orders carry one. The 8 oz amber glass jar is the shop's standard size; a 4 oz travel tin serves as a first purchase or a stocking filler, and a 14 oz double-wick ceramic serves as a larger gift. The reed diffusers come in one size, with a refill bottle sold separately, and are the line most likely to bring a buyer back.

The Candle & Diffuser Set pairs an 8 oz candle with a diffuser in the same scent, boxed together with a handwritten note. It is expected to be the most popular single listing, because it answers the gift buyer's question of what to send in one click and lifts the value of the order towards the \$46 average the plan is built on.

6.3 Additional Services

- Custom favors for weddings, showers and corporate gifts, in 4 oz tins with a custom label, booked through custom listings with a minimum order and a set lead time.
- A wholesale line of the six steadiest scents for boutiques and gift shops, offered ahead of their holiday buying.
- Gift notes written by hand and sent with the order at no charge.

6.4 What Sets Us Apart

Many handmade candle shops on Etsy sell candles alone. Emberwick's matched diffuser line raises what each buyer spends, and the refill gives a reason to come back that a candle shop has no equivalent for. Behind both sits a testing routine that keeps the product consistent from the first order to the thousandth, which is what earns the reviews the shop depends on.

6.5 Materials Sourcing & Product Safety

The candles are poured from a natural soy wax blend bought from U.S. candle supply houses in 50 lb cases, with phthalate-free fragrance oils used at a 7% to 8% load, cotton or wood wicks, and amber glass and matte ceramic vessels made for candles. The diffusers use an alcohol-free base, natural rattan reeds and clear glass bottles. Each material has a named backup supplier, because a vessel or fragrance that goes out of stock in October cannot be swapped without retesting.

Before any scent is listed, every combination of fragrance, vessel and wick size is burn tested in four-hour sessions to the bottom of the jar, checking for a full melt pool, tunnelling, soot and flame height. Results are logged by batch, and each batch of 48 is numbered so any complaint can be traced to its pour date and materials.

Federal rules for candles are narrow but strict. Metal-cored wicks may hold no more than 0.06% lead by weight in the core; Emberwick uses cotton and wood wicks with no metal core at all. Every vessel carries a fire safety warning label following the voluntary ASTM F2058 standard for candle fire safety labeling, with burning instructions printed beside it.

6.5.1 Hand-Poured Soy Candles

Soy wax candles poured by hand in batches of 48 in the Asheville studio, in reusable amber glass and matte ceramic vessels. Each scent is built around a season or a room, from cedar and smoked vanilla to fig leaf and black tea, and every candle cures for ten days before it is listed for sale.



\$18 to \$38 per candle

A 4 oz travel tin is \$18, the 8 oz jar that most orders carry is \$30, and the 14 oz double-wick ceramic is \$38. Domestic shipping is held under \$6 so listings keep their place in Etsy search.

Specifications

- Natural soy wax poured in small batches of 48
- Cotton or wood wicks with no metal core
- Fragrance oils free of phthalates, at a 7% to 8% load
- Cured for ten days before listing
- About 45 to 50 hours of burn time from the 8 oz jar
- Fire safety warning label on the base of every vessel

6.5.2 Reed Diffusers and Refills

Reed diffusers in the same scents as the candles, for rooms where an open flame does not suit, such as a bathroom, an entryway or a child's room. Each comes in a clear glass bottle with natural rattan reeds, and a refill bottle lets a buyer keep the same scent going without buying the glass again.



\$32 per diffuser, \$18 per refill

The refill is priced to bring a buyer back every two to three months, which is where most repeat orders on the diffuser line are expected to come from.

Specifications

- 100 ml clear glass bottle with a cork stopper
- Eight natural rattan reeds, packed separately for shipping
- Lasts about eight to ten weeks in a mid-sized room
- 100 ml refill bottle with a screw cap
- Available in every scent the candle line carries
- Alcohol-free diffuser base

6.5.3 Features



Matching scent library

Every candle scent is also made as a reed diffuser, so a buyer can scent two rooms the same way or give a matched pair.



Small-batch pours

Candles are poured 48 at a time, so a new scent can be tested and listed in weeks rather than months.



Refillable diffusers

Refill bottles let a buyer keep a diffuser going without buying the glass and reeds again.



Gift-ready packaging

Every order ships in a kraft gift box with tissue and an optional handwritten note at no extra charge.



Tested before listing

Each scent, vessel and wick pairing is burn tested to the end of the jar before it goes on sale.



Seasonal releases

Three new scents arrive each season, which gives returning buyers a reason to come back four times a year.

6.5.4 Pricing

Signature Candle \$30 per candle • 8 oz amber glass jar • About 45 to 50 hours of burn time • Choice of any scent in the library • Kraft gift box	Most Popular Candle & Diffuser Set \$58 per set • One 8 oz candle and one reed diffuser • Matching scent across both pieces • Gift box with a handwritten note • Ships in one parcel	Seasonal Home Collection \$84 per collection • Two 8 oz candles and one reed diffuser • The current season's three scents • One diffuser refill included • Gift box with a scent card
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Marketing & Sales Strategies

7.1 Market Positioning

7.2 Marketing Objectives

7.3 Online Marketing

7.4 Public Relations and Branding

7.5 Partnership & Collaboration Strategy

7.6 Customer Loyalty & Retention

7.7 Sales Channels

7.1 Market Positioning

Emberwick is positioned as a handmade home fragrance shop for gift buyers and home buyers who want a scent they can carry from room to room: priced above mass-market candles, competing on tested quality, matched pairs and careful delivery rather than on price.



7.2 Marketing Objectives

- Reach 2,232 orders in the first year, the break-even level, and first-year revenue of \$126,585.
- Hold the shop's conversion rate at 2.6% of visits or better.
- Build an average review rating of 4.8 or higher by the first holiday season.
- Have one buyer in five return for a second scent or a diffuser refill within a year.

Etsy Ads

\$337

per month

Promoted listings for the top-converting scents, raised through the holiday weeks.

Offsite Ads fees

\$211

per month

Etsy's fee on orders that come from its ads on search engines and social networks.

Samples and gift writers

\$169

per month

Candles and diffusers sent to home and gift writers and small creators for honest reviews.

Holiday social posts

\$127

per month

Paid posts on social media around Mother's Day and the holiday gift season.

Total marketing budget: \$10,127 a year, \$844 a month.

7.3 Online Marketing

On Etsy, marketing starts with the listing itself. Titles and tags are written in the words buyers type, such as the scent, the room and the occasion, and every listing carries the attributes Etsy uses to match queries. Photographs are shot in the studio in natural light, with the first image showing the candle lit and the second showing its size in a hand, because most buyers see them first on a phone.

Paid promotion is modest and seasonal. The marketing budget is 8% of revenue, weighted towards Etsy Ads on the listings that already convert and raised through November and December, when a third of candle buying happens.

7.4 Public Relations and Branding

The brand is quiet and consistent: amber glass, kraft boxes, a single serif wordmark and scent names that describe a place rather than a dessert. Every parcel looks the same when it is opened, which matters more for a gift than any advertisement. The founders' story, a candle maker from the Blue Ridge pouring in small batches, is told on the shop page and in the insert card, and pitched to regional gift guides each autumn.

7.5 Partnership & Collaboration Strategy

Partnerships are chosen to put the product in front of buyers the shop would not otherwise reach: gift box companies that curate small-batch goods, wedding planners who order favors, and a handful of independent boutiques that stock the wholesale line. Each is approached once the shop has its first fifty reviews, so the partner sees evidence and not a promise.

7.6 Customer Loyalty & Retention

A candle burns down and a diffuser runs dry, and that is the shop's retention plan. Every diffuser ships with a card offering a refill, and buyers receive one message after delivery and one when a new season's scents are released, with a returning-buyer coupon. A buyer who liked a scent can find it again by name, because the library keeps its steady sellers year to year.

7.7 Sales Channels

The Etsy shop carries almost all of the revenue, through search orders from new buyers and repeat orders from returning ones. The shop sells nowhere else in its first year, so the founders' time goes into the channel that pays.



Etsy search orders

The largest route by far, worth most of first-year revenue, and dependent on listing photographs, reviews and shipping kept under \$6.



Repeat and refill orders

Buyers returning for a second scent or a diffuser refill through the shop's follow-up messages and coupons, worth more each year as the review count grows.



Custom gift and favor orders

Larger custom listings for weddings, showers and client gifts, booked a few weeks ahead and dependent on clear lead times and minimums.



Wholesale boutique accounts

Gift shops and boutiques buying at wholesale prices, worth about a tenth of revenue and dependent on keeping the holiday stock build on schedule.



Write a marketing and sales strategy for your business

Start writing →

Operations Plan

8.1 Daily Operations

8.2 Staffing & Training

8.3 Inventory & Equipment Management

8.4 Location and Facilities

8.5 Milestones & Timeline

8.6 Order Fulfillment & Shipping

8.1 Daily Operations

The studio works to a weekly rhythm built around how candles are made. Pouring happens on Mondays and Tuesdays, in batches of 48, so each batch can cure for ten days before it is labelled and moved to finished stock. Diffusers are filled to order or in small runs mid-week, since they need no curing. Orders are packed every weekday morning and handed to the carrier by early afternoon, and customer messages are answered twice a day, because Etsy weighs a shop's response rate in search.

Maren Ashby runs production: the pour schedule, scent development, burn testing and quality checks. Caleb Ostrander runs everything after the jar is filled: listings, photography, the Etsy dashboard, supplier orders, wholesale accounts and the books. Both pack orders in the busy weeks.

8.2 Staffing & Training

The two founders do all the work at launch. A part-time packing and fulfillment assistant joins in August of the first year, working about 20 hours a week, paid near the Asheville rate for hand packers, ahead of the holiday season. A seasonal packer is budgeted for the holiday weeks once volume justifies it.

Training is short and specific. The assistant learns the packing standard for glass, the label and lot-number check every candle passes before it leaves, and the shipping software, then packs alongside a founder for two weeks before working alone. Nobody but Maren pours until the burn-test log for each scent has been read and signed.

8.3 Inventory & Equipment Management

Inventory runs at about 50 days of sales, held as raw materials and as finished stock. Wax, fragrance oil, wicks and vessels are reordered when stock falls to six weeks of use, and vessels and fragrance for the holiday range are bought in July, before suppliers' autumn backlogs. Finished stock is kept at about two weeks of sales for each scent, rising to four weeks from October.

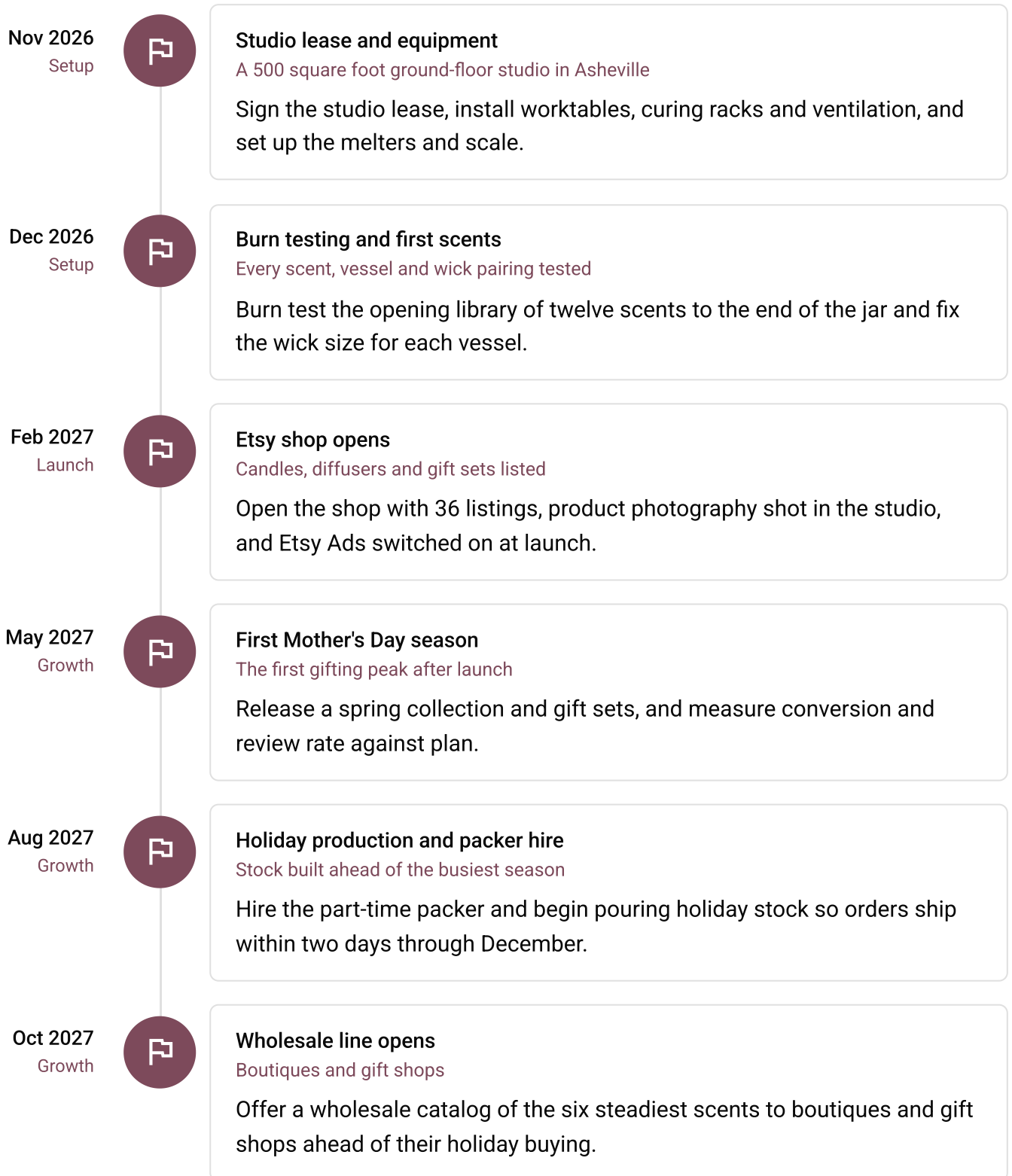
Equipment is simple and cheap to duplicate: two wax melters, pouring pitchers, a digital scale, thermometers, a heat gun and wick-centering tools. A spare melter is kept so a failure in December does not stop production, and every batch's pour temperature and fragrance load is recorded on its lot card.

8.4 Location and Facilities

The studio is a ground-floor space of about 500 square feet in Asheville, at a rent of \$850 a month. It holds a pouring area with ventilation and a fire extinguisher, curing racks, finished-stock shelving, a photography corner with natural light, and a packing bench by the door. The founders are looking for space outside the riverside buildings that flooded during Hurricane Helene in 2024, because a single flood would destroy the shop's whole inventory at once.

8.5 Milestones & Timeline

The timeline below runs from signing the studio lease in November 2026 to the opening of the wholesale line in October 2027. The milestone that matters most is the first holiday season: holiday stock is poured from August, so the shop goes into November with its inventory built and a packer trained.



8.6 Order Fulfillment & Shipping

Shipping glass to every state is the part of this business that most often goes wrong, so it is designed rather than improvised. Each candle ships in a molded pulp insert inside a corrugated box, with recycled paper fill and no plastic; diffusers travel with the reeds packed separately and the bottle sealed and bagged, so a leak cannot reach the reeds or the box. Every packing method is drop tested from waist height before it is used.

- Orders ship within two business days, and within one in the holiday weeks.
- Labels are bought through Etsy at commercial postage rates; a single 8 oz candle ships by USPS Ground Advantage, and larger orders are compared against UPS.
- Box sizes are chosen to keep a single candle under one pound packed, so domestic shipping can be held under \$6.
- Every parcel is photographed before it is sealed, so a breakage claim can be settled with the carrier and the buyer at once.
- A broken item is replaced the same day it is reported, without asking the buyer to return anything.

The holiday weeks set the limits of the whole system. The shop publishes a last order date for Christmas delivery in early December, set from the carrier's own ground transit times to the farthest zones, and switches listings to a longer processing time the day after it. Orders that arrive after the cutoff are accepted with the later date shown at checkout, rather than promised and missed, because a late gift costs a review as well as a refund.

Wholesale orders are packed differently. Candles travel by the case in divided cartons, twelve or twenty-four to a box, with the shop's lot numbers on the outer label so a boutique can report a problem by batch. Wholesale accounts pay their own freight, and an order is not released until the shop has enough finished stock left to cover two weeks of Etsy sales in every scent the account has ordered.

Postage is reviewed every time the carriers change their prices, not once a year. The Postal Service's temporary surcharge on ground parcels runs to January 2027, so the shipping profiles are checked again when it ends, and box sizes, the free-shipping threshold for gift sets and the share of postage built into the item price are reset from the new rates rather than left where they were.

Management Team

9.1 Key Members

9.2 Organization Chart

9.3 Advisory Board Members

9.1 Key Members

Accountability is split at the jar. Production answers for everything up to the moment a candle or diffuser is finished: scent quality, consistency from batch to batch, burn test results, and holiday stock built on schedule. It is measured on defect and complaint rates and on whether finished stock meets the two-week target for every scent.

Operations and the shop answer for everything after it: listings, search placement, customer messages, shipping times, wholesale accounts and the books. They are measured on the figures Etsy itself ranks the shop by (review rating, message response rate and case rate), on conversion rate against the 2.6% plan, and on monthly revenue against budget. Fulfillment answers for orders leaving within two business days and for breakage.



Maren Ashby

Founder & Head Chandler · maren@emberwickcandleco.example

Six years making candles for craft markets and friends, with a certificate in fragrance blending and every Emberwick scent developed and burn tested by her.



Caleb Ostrander

Co-Founder, Operations & Shop · caleb@emberwickcandleco.example

Eight years in e-commerce operations for an outdoor gear retailer, running listings, shipping and customer service.



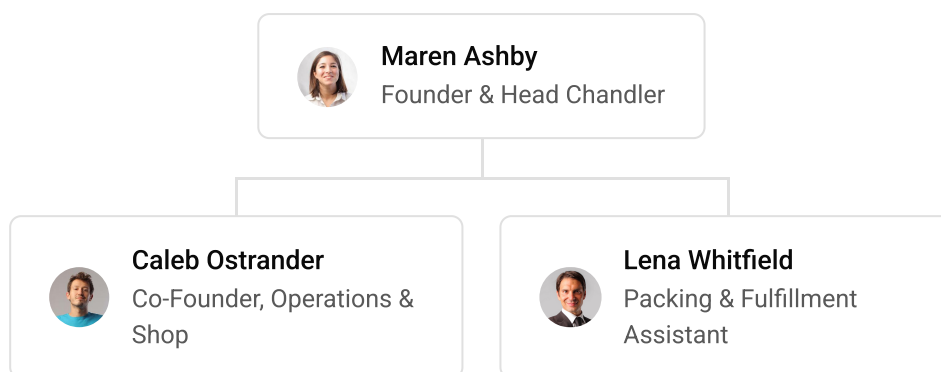
Lena Whitfield

Packing & Fulfillment Assistant · lena@emberwickcandleco.example

Part-time packer joining before the first holiday season, with experience packing fragile goods for a ceramics studio.

9.2 Organization Chart

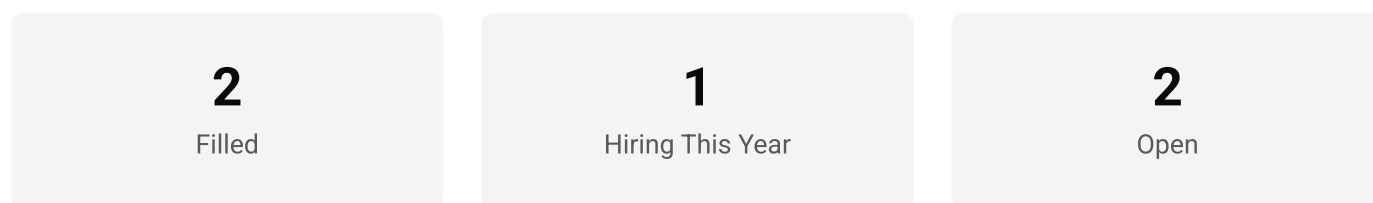
The structure is flat because the business is small. The founder who runs production has the final say on product and quality, the co-founder has it on the shop and spending, and the two meet each Monday to set the week's pours against open orders. The part-time assistant takes direction from operations on packing and from production on lot checks.



9.3 Advisory Board Members

The founders will draw on two outside advisers rather than a formal board: an accountant who works with small product businesses, to review the monthly accounts and the quarterly tax estimates, and an experienced maker who has run a wholesale line, to advise on pricing and terms before the first boutique accounts open. Both are paid by the hour as needed.

9.3.1 Hiring Plan



Group By Department	Position Filled	Time of Hire	Time of Start	Filled
Production	1 of 1	0 days	0 days	100%
Shop & Marketing	1 of 1	0 days	0 days	100%
Packing & Fulfillment	0 of 2	30 days	14 days	0%

 Invite your team to edit and review your plan

Start collaborating →

Financial Plan

10.1 Key Assumptions

10.2 Capital Requirements and Use of Funds

10.3 Income Statement (3 Year projections)

10.4 Balance Sheet (3 Year projections)

10.5 Cash Flow Statement (3 Year projections)

10.6 Break Even Analysis

10.1 Key Assumptions

Revenue follows the way an Etsy shop actually earns: monthly shop visits, times the share that order, times the average order, with wholesale added on top. At full run rate the plan assumes 9,000 visits a month, a conversion rate of 2.6%, inside the 2% to 3% that seller guides treat as a working target, an average order of \$46, and wholesale worth 12% on top of Etsy sales. The shop opens at 50% of that run rate while its first reviews build, reaches full run rate after 6 months, and grows 20% a year after that.

Gross margin is held at 60.0%, because cost of sales carries the materials and packaging and also Etsy's transaction, processing and listing fees, which every order pays. Payroll is 26% of revenue, covering modest salaries for the two founders and a part-time packer. Marketing is 8% of revenue. Studio rent is \$850 a month, technology \$120 and administration \$260. Etsy collects sales tax as marketplace facilitator, so the shop holds none of its own, and Etsy pays out within 4 days, so almost no cash is tied up in receivables. Inventory is held at 50 days of sales.

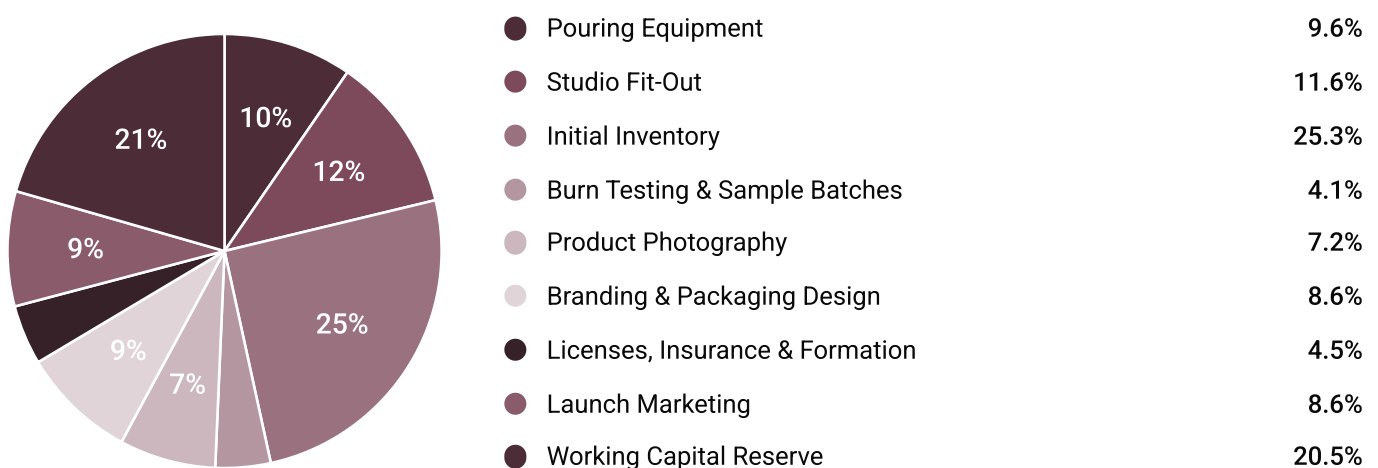
On those assumptions revenue is \$126,585 in the first year, \$151,902 in the second and \$182,282 in the third, with net income of \$5,601, \$9,946 and \$15,115. Break-even revenue is \$102,661, or 2,232 orders, which the first year passes. Third-year net income ranges from \$5,059 in the conservative case to \$31,532 in the upside case, so the shop stays profitable even if visits and conversion fall short.

10.2 Capital Requirements and Use of Funds

The shop needs \$29,200 to open. The largest single use is the first inventory of wax, fragrance, vessels, reeds, labels and boxes. The rest buys pouring equipment and the studio fit-out, burn testing, product photography, branding and packaging design, formation and insurance, and launch marketing, and holds a working capital reserve for the first months.

The founders put in \$25,000 of their own savings and borrow \$15,000 through an SBA Microloan at 9.5% over 5 years. The loan is repaid from operating cash, and no profit is distributed for the first three years, so the business funds its own inventory and new scents as it grows.

10.2.1 Use of Funds



Use Of Funds	Amount
Pouring Equipment	\$2,800.00
Studio Fit-Out	\$3,400.00
Initial Inventory	\$7,400.00
Burn Testing & Sample Batches	\$1,200.00
Product Photography	\$2,100.00
Branding & Packaging Design	\$2,500.00
Licenses, Insurance & Formation	\$1,300.00
Launch Marketing	\$2,500.00
Working Capital Reserve	\$6,000.00

10.3 Income Statement (3 Year projections)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Revenue	\$126,584.64	\$151,901.57	\$182,281.88	\$460,768.09
Cost of Sales	\$50,633.86	\$60,760.63	\$72,912.75	\$184,307.24
General Costs	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Revenue Specific Costs	\$35,443.70	\$42,532.44	\$51,038.92	\$129,015.06
Personnel Costs (Direct Labor)	\$15,190.16	\$18,228.19	\$21,873.83	\$55,292.18
Gross Margin	\$75,950.78	\$91,140.94	\$109,369.13	\$276,460.85
Gross Margin (%)	60.00%	60.00%	60.00%	60.00%
Operating Expense	\$61,596.32	\$70,963.59	\$82,204.30	\$214,764.21
Payroll Expense (Indirect Labor)	\$32,912.01	\$39,494.41	\$47,393.29	\$119,799.71
General Expense	\$28,684.31	\$31,469.18	\$34,811.01	\$94,964.50
Bad Debt	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Amortization of Current Assets	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
EBITDA	\$14,354.46	\$20,177.35	\$27,164.83	\$61,696.64
Additional Expense	\$8,753.79	\$10,231.46	\$12,049.68	\$31,034.93
Long Term Depreciation	\$5,840.00	\$6,447.61	\$7,176.73	\$19,464.34
Gain or loss from Sale of Assets	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
EBIT	\$8,514.46	\$13,729.74	\$19,988.10	\$42,232.30
Interest Expense	\$1,425.00	\$1,140.00	\$855.00	\$3,420.00
EBT	\$7,089.46	\$12,589.74	\$19,133.10	\$38,812.30
Income Tax Expense / Benefit	\$1,488.79	\$2,643.85	\$4,017.95	\$8,150.59
Total Expense	\$120,983.97	\$141,955.68	\$167,166.73	\$430,106.38
Net Income	\$5,600.67	\$9,945.89	\$15,115.15	\$30,661.71
Net Income (%)	4.42%	6.55%	8.29%	6.65%
Retained Earning Opening	\$0.00	\$5,600.67	\$15,546.56	
Owner's Distribution	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Retained Earning Closing	\$5,600.67	\$15,546.56	\$30,661.71	\$30,661.71

10.4 Balance Sheet (3 Year projections)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Assets	\$44,681.51	\$52,043.57	\$64,658.12	\$64,658.12
Current Assets	\$21,321.51	\$32,093.15	\$48,238.79	\$48,238.79
Cash	\$14,385.36	\$23,769.78	\$38,250.74	\$38,250.74
Accounts Receivable	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Inventory	\$6,936.15	\$8,323.37	\$9,988.05	\$9,988.05
Other Current Assets	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Long Term Assets	\$23,360.00	\$19,950.42	\$16,419.33	\$16,419.33
Gross Long Term Assets	\$29,200.00	\$32,238.03	\$35,883.67	\$35,883.67
Accumulated Depreciation	\$5,840.00	\$12,287.61	\$19,464.34	\$19,464.34
Liabilities & Equity	\$44,681.51	\$52,043.57	\$64,658.12	\$64,658.12
Liabilities	\$14,080.84	\$11,497.01	\$8,996.41	\$8,996.41
Current Liabilities	\$5,080.84	\$5,497.01	\$5,996.41	\$5,996.41
Accounts Payable	\$2,080.84	\$2,497.01	\$2,996.41	\$2,996.41
Income Tax Payable	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Sales Tax Payable	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Short Term Debt	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00
Long Term Liabilities	\$9,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00
Long Term Debt	\$9,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00
Equity	\$30,600.67	\$40,546.56	\$55,661.71	\$55,661.71
Paid-in Capital	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Common Stock	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Preferred Stock	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Owner's Contribution	\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00
Retained Earnings	\$5,600.67	\$15,546.56	\$30,661.71	\$30,661.71
Check	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

10.5 Cash Flow Statement (3 Year projections)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Cash Received	\$126,584.64	\$151,901.57	\$182,281.88	\$460,768.09
Cash Paid	\$119,999.28	\$136,479.12	\$161,155.28	\$417,633.68
COS & General Expenses	\$68,983.32	\$74,972.67	\$87,015.21	\$230,971.20
Salary & Wages	\$48,102.17	\$57,722.60	\$69,267.12	\$175,091.89
Interest	\$1,425.00	\$1,140.00	\$855.00	\$3,420.00
Sales Tax	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Income Tax	\$1,488.79	\$2,643.85	\$4,017.95	\$8,150.59
Net Cash From Operations	\$6,585.36	\$15,422.45	\$21,126.60	\$43,134.41
Assets Sell	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Assets Purchase	\$29,200.00	\$3,038.03	\$3,645.64	\$35,883.67
Net Cash From Investments	(\$29,200.00)	(\$3,038.03)	(\$3,645.64)	(\$35,883.67)
Amount Received	\$40,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$40,000.00
Loan Received	\$15,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$15,000.00
Common Stock	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Preferred Stock	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Owner's Contribution	\$25,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$25,000.00
Amount Paid	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$9,000.00
Loan Capital	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$9,000.00
Dividends & Distributions	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Net Cash From Financing	\$37,000.00	(\$3,000.00)	(\$3,000.00)	\$31,000.00
Summary				
Starting Cash	\$0.00	\$14,385.36	\$23,769.78	
Cash In	\$166,584.64	\$151,901.57	\$182,281.88	\$500,768.09
Cash Out	\$152,199.28	\$142,517.15	\$167,800.92	\$462,517.35
Change in Cash	\$14,385.36	\$9,384.42	\$14,480.96	\$38,250.74
Ending Cash	\$14,385.36	\$23,769.78	\$38,250.74	\$38,250.74

10.6 Break Even Analysis

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Starting Revenue	\$0.00	\$126,584.64	\$278,486.21	\$278,486.21
Net Revenue	\$126,584.64	\$151,901.57	\$182,281.88	\$182,281.88
Closing Revenue	\$126,584.64	\$278,486.21	\$460,768.09	\$460,768.09
Starting Expense	\$0.00	\$120,983.97	\$262,939.65	\$262,939.65
Net Expense	\$120,983.97	\$141,955.68	\$167,166.73	\$167,166.73
Closing Expense	\$120,983.97	\$262,939.65	\$430,106.38	\$430,106.38
Is Break Even?	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Break Even Month	Oct '26	-	-	
Days Required	5 Days	-	-	
Break Even Revenue	\$102,473.28	-	-	



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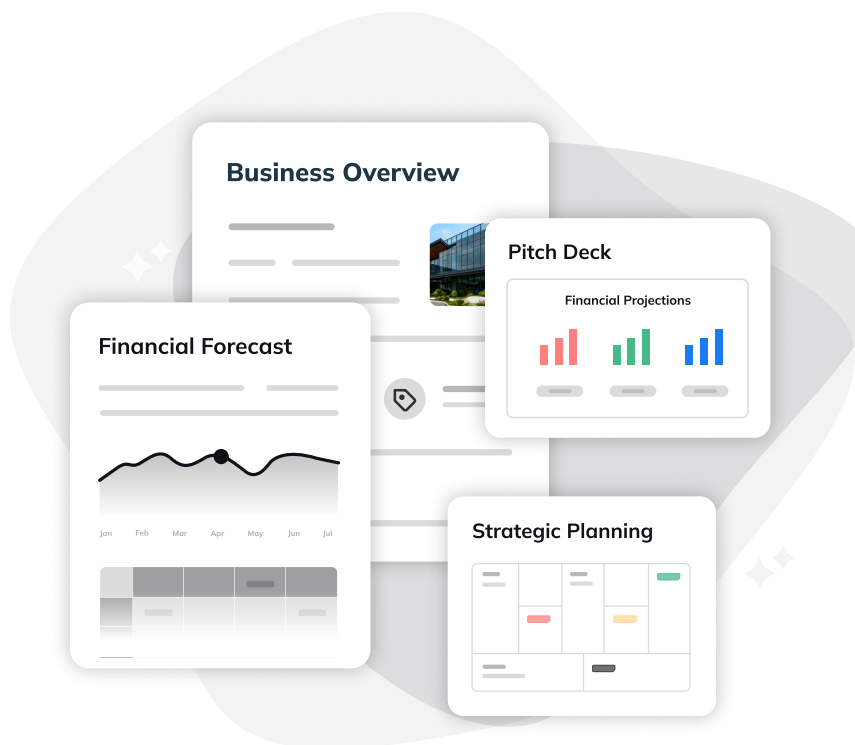
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