

A High School Freshman Raises Funds on Kickstarter for Her New Kind of Backpack

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Entrepreneur and high school freshman Emily Scott, 14, recently joined KWHS interviewer Anthony Williams in the studio to discuss her invention, the [Clip and Zip Backpack](#). Scott is taking many lessons away from her first business experience, including the emotional roller coaster of crowd funding a business idea through an online platform like Kickstarter. Her campaign to raise money for her backpack idea is live until Saturday, April 14, 2018 at 5:13 p.m. EDT.

Below is an edited version of their conversation.

Knowledge@Wharton High School (KWHS): Hi, I'm Anthony Williams with Knowledge@Wharton High School. Joining us today in the KWHS studio is inventor Emily Scott. Emily is a high school freshman and the University Scholars Program of the Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School in Philadelphia. Like most high school students, Emily's got all kinds of things going on. She's an excellent student, a competitive swimmer, a classical pianist, and an avid fan of Dungeons and Dragons. Emily is also an alumnus of the Young Entrepreneurs Academy, where she created a product that is now patent-pending.

Emily's Clip and Zip backpack has gone through four prototypes and six manufacturers and is currently the focus of a fundraising campaign on Kickstarter. So hi, Emily.

Emily Scott: Hello.

KWHS: Thanks for talking business and entrepreneurship with us here today at KWHS. To begin with, I'm really curious to know how someone goes from middle school to crowdsourcing a new product on Kickstarter. When did you develop an interest in inventing, and what is the Clip and Zip Backpack?

Scott: Well, it was never really an interest in inventing. I'm a swimmer, and so every day after swimming, I used to put my wet swimsuit into the bottom of my backpack. The problem with that is that it stays in the bottom of my backpack when I get home. The next day you take it out, and it's cold and wet and not very fun to put on. It was sort of a "eureka" moment, a "there-has-to-be-a-better-way" moment. So, I invented the Clip and Zip Backpack.

The way that it works is it's a clothesline within a backpack. There's an interior strap, and after swimming, you take your swimsuit, you clip it onto the interior strap, and then you take it home. Then you unzip the backpack. It opens sort of like a clamshell, and your clothes are already hanging, ready to dry.

KWHS: You've had four prototypes and six manufacturers. It sounds like product development has been pretty comprehensive. What have you learned about this process and what it takes to achieve this final design?

Scott: I think that a common misconception with entrepreneurship is that it's easy. I mean, it's a great ideal to be able to own your business, to make your own hours, to have profits and all of that. But really the key behind it is persistence.

I remember hearing once, somebody said, "You only see a person's successes, never the private sacrifices taken to reach them." And I think that's really true, especially in this kind of environment. So the iterations were difficult, and after lots and lots of work, we have finally reached a product that's ready to go to market.

KWHS: Can you please elaborate a little bit more on what you mean by “persistence?” And what really has this journey been like for you? Can you paint me a picture?

Scott: Well, I think that there’s, of course, the technical persistence — the knowledge — and how you learn through the process through the iterations of prototypes and such. But I think there’s also an emotional persistence. There’s always that fear that, “Well, I think this product is great,” and you hope that everybody else does, too. But there’s always that little bit of uncertainty that perhaps it might not go to market. And because of that, it’s sort of a rollercoaster.

You get your first couple of hits on Kickstarter, and it’s great. And then all of a sudden it goes dead for a day, and that fear just keeps coming back. And then you get even more, and it’s a wild ride.

KWHS: You are raising money for this new product for a few more weeks on Kickstarter. What has it been like to launch and run a Kickstarter campaign? How successful has it been so far?

Scott: It’s been a whirlwind. Launching a Kickstarter campaign is an every day job. Not “everyday” as in “ordinary,” but every day as in you have to log on every day. We check who has seen our video, who has donated, who has bought the backpack, and how our product has been going so far. Right now we are 5% funded, so we still have a long way to go, but we are hopeful that with our continuing social media campaigns that we can raise enough awareness and be able to get people to see our product. And I’m sure that as they see it, they’ll love it.

KWHS: You’ve mentioned some of the skills that you’ve used in this journey. We know that you want to study neuroscience at Yale University and become a cognitive neuropsychologist. What is involved in that field of study, and why are you choosing that particular path? Has this experience helped you to develop any skills that you think that you may use in the future?

Scott: Well, neuropsychology or neuroscience in general is a really broad topic. The reason I’m interested in it is because I love learning how people work — how people’s brains work, in that sense — how they think and how they make decisions. And yes, I do think that this has really helped, because it has taught the persistence needed in not only the business world, but in the professional world, as well.

Especially through connections, I’ve learned that they’re extremely important because the more people you have to view your product, statistically speaking the more likely they are to buy that product, because you have a higher pool to draw from. So in that sense, I learned the value of marketing myself and my product.

KWHS: Is there anything else, then, that you think that you would like to talk to other young entrepreneurs about, whether it be what you’ve learned from the marketing, the crowdsourcing, anything business-related from your experience?

Scott: I kind of touched on this before, but I think the biggest issue is persistence. I think that it’s something that you have to be aware of from the get-go [if you want to be a successful entrepreneur]. And you have to realize that you need to kind of hit the ground running before you start your [crowdsourcing] campaign. And then once you start it, you have to maintain it. It’s not something that you can just post on the Internet and let it be.