

WRAL BUSINESS

DIY, home improvement growth mean hundreds of jobs at Durham-based Spoonflower

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By Lora Lavigne, WRAL Durham reporter

DURHAM, N.C. — According to economists, the home décor and remodeling industry continue to surge during the pandemic. A Durham company is seeing the benefits of that firsthand.

Spoonflower, a digital textile manufacturing company, started in a 400-square-foot office space. Since the pandemic (and the accompanying boom in home improvements), the company has tripled in size.

“Behind me is fulfillment. In front of me is all of our wallpaper. It’s just amazing to be here,” said Michael Jones, Spoonflower’s CEO as he gave a tour of its newest facility.

[WRAL News first reported on the company in July](#) when it began to see a surge in orders for its fabric, especially hand-crafted masks.

“We didn’t know what to expect, and what we saw in 2020 was the creative economy – those that are making things, those that are doing DIY projects, those are you doing things in their homes. It exploded,” Jones said.

Within 30 days, the startup doubled the size of its factory to 50,000 square feet, added three new industrial printers and 100 more employees.

“I understand that it’s been extremely hard for a lot of people, and honestly I feel so grateful that I was actually able to start working here,” said Jose Balle, who was hired in September of last year.

“It really got me through a really tough time,” he added.

This marketplace for digital creatives is something economists notice is surging worldwide, especially in the renovation and housing industry.

Dr. Henry McKoy, an economist at North Carolina Central University, said a record low interest rate for homes also plays a huge role in this.

“Folks are buying homes. Folks are refinancing homes. Folks are really driving that engine around housing, so it’s no surprise that companies that deal with housing, that deal with manufacturing in that aspect, would be benefiting from a time like this,” he said.

“Thanks to the growth of Etsy, Shopify, all of these small businesses, we’re starting to see more and more of the creative artist makers really

start to come online. So we think we are just at the beginning, and it's gonna be even more growth to come," Jones said.

Spoonflower is now ready to hire another 100 more people as the demand for these products continues to grow. The business is hiring for all departments – from local sewing or graphic artists to operations and customer service.

"It kind of just proves that creativity will always be around, especially in really hard times. It's a really good outlet for people in this kind of reaffirms that," said Balle.

Spoonflower's dramatic expansion is due in no small part to its average reach of 30,000 new monthly customers, and the effect its myriad community-building initiatives – including its Small Business Grant, Student Project Grant, Design Challenges, Artist Spotlights, Trade Program and Trend Reports – have on its direct and marketplace (e.g. Etsy, Amazon, Ebay and others).

This year, Spoonflower will announce several new product launches in every category, furthering its dominant reach within the creative economy.

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