



# Pens Ink

Anna C. Williams – Owner • [www.PensInk.com](http://www.PensInk.com)

**Success Magazine: Anna, you are the youngest Woman of Distinction and Up and Coming Entrepreneur in Success Magazine. May I ask how old you are?**

Anna Williams: I turned eleven in February.

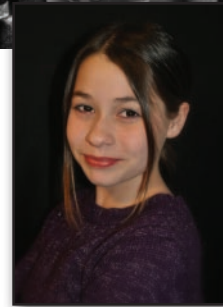
**SM: What inspired you to become an entrepreneur?**

AW: When I was eight, my dad and I saw a teenage boy on the Internet, making pens for friends and family, and eventually as a business. I'm not sure why, but I just knew I wanted to make pens. Being adventurous, I told my dad that I wanted to make pens too. He immediately said no, that I was too young to work on a lathe. I think he also said that I would kill myself, and even if he said yes, my mother would kill him. So, every few months I would ask again, and again, and again ... the answer was always NO. Finally, last year when I turned ten, I asked again and my dad hesitated, then said maybe. That was all I needed. At that point I knew I could wear him down (sorry dad!). The next day I had my first lathe from Harbor Freight. My first pen was pretty ugly, but I'll blame that on the filed down screwdriver my dad made for me because we didn't have any chisels yet. Once the chisels and a few pen kits arrived I seriously tried to make a good pen. The first few were not too

good, but I tried a few more and they got better each time. By the time I made my fifth or sixth pen, I knew I could really do this. Once friends and family seemed truly interested, I realized I could start selling them.

**SM: What products do you create?**

AW: I started out last year making only one type of pen called a "slimline." About a month later I got a request for a wine stopper (which I find funny because I can't drink wine for another ten years). By late last summer, I decided to start adding more pen styles. I now offer twelve different pen styles—some that include matching mechanical pencils. My pen collection currently includes ballpoint, rollerball, fountain pens, stylus pens, and stylus. I have also added a ball divot repair tool for golfers and a purse hanger for women. What I like best is all the materials I get to work with when making my products. I can make any of my products with domestic and exotic woods, certified woods (like ancient bog wood that is over 4,000 years old or Bethlehem olivewood that is pruned from olive trees that are over 2,000 years old), historical woods, burls, and other specialty woods. I also use beautiful acrylics, and even stone. Overall, I offer over 130 different kinds of material and can pretty much get anything I don't have.



On my website, I offer products that I have already made (this is my "Buy Now" page), but most customers enjoy going to my "Design Your Own Pen" page and selecting exactly what they want. This gives them an opportunity to select the pen style, what type of finish, the material used, engraving, gift boxes, and more. We've tried to make this a fun experience as my website takes you through a step by step process for designing your pen.

I would like to mention that in April I will be adding cuff links that can match your pen. I suppose I could also have a matching wine stopper and ball divot repair tool as well. Just think, you could play golf, drink wine, sign important documents, and wear your cuff links and be color coordinated. But, I don't think men worry about things like that!



**SM: What is your market strategy for Pens Ink?**

AW: Good question. I'm not sure if I have a really good answer, but I'm hoping to double my sales from last year by increasing my business accounts, improving my website presence, enhancing my Facebook page, and increase my networking. After all, I can only sell so many pens to my family and friends! I also need to better understand international sales as I have received a few orders from Australia and India. I was so excited to get the order, and then realized I had no clue how to get it to them or what it was going to cost. It's a good thing that my customers are so nice and understanding. So far, I would consider every one of my customers to be a new friend!

Right now, I don't know from day to day where or when I might get my next sale. I am looking for some opportunities to show my products to businesses that may already have a budget for giving gifts to clients, customers, or employees. I would hope they recognize how unique my hand-turned pens are and would consider including them as one of the gifts they might offer. The nice thing about a pen is that it will last for a very long time, and I think a hand-made pen is a gift people will remember.

**SM: What entrepreneur inspires you to greatness?**

AW: I'm not sure how to answer this

question. My mom and dad aren't business owners, but they are the ones that have allowed me to get this far. They listen to my crazy ideas and support me 100%. I think a lot of kids can get ignored by adults, but I've been lucky. Most of the time, my parents listen to me and offer me opportunities to try new things and take some risks.

We also have a family friend that does own a business in Schenectady, and he has been one of my biggest fans since I started. He has always been positive, supportive, and he has bought my pens as gifts for his clients as well as for his own personal use. He keeps asking me what I'm going to do when I have more business than I can handle. That question still scares me because I really don't have an answer yet, but I'm working on it.

**SM: How do you find the time to be an entrepreneur, student, and a kid?**

AW: I do have other obligations, including competitive ice skating, dance, trumpet, chorus, and my least favorite—homework. My mom and dad keep me in line, or at least they try. There are many times when I need "motivation" to stay focused. I find that if I have a schedule I am more productive. One of my problems is that everything excites me and I want to try everything. Like last year when I told my dad I wanted to add pottery to my business. He wasn't too happy about that, and told me to concentrate on pens for now.

**SM: What advice would you give to other young entrepreneurs who are thinking of starting a new company?**

AW: I think the most important thing is to not listen to anyone telling you that you can't do something. You have to be willing to try new things and you can't be afraid to make mistakes. Most important, you have to believe in yourself. When I was eight, I knew I could make a pen, not because I had ever made one, but because I believed that I could do anything if I had the opportunity to try.

