



Hannah Redmond (right) with her sister and business partner, Ariel.

MBA alumna realizes dream of being an entrepreneur as venture takes off

Hannah Redmond, who completed a Rutgers Part-Time MBA in 2012, is the co-founder of Happy Box, a company recently ranked No. 53 on Inc's 2022 list of the 5,000 fastest-growing private companies in the U.S.

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Hannah Redmond kept retrieving lessons from her [MBA classes at Rutgers](https://www.business.rutgers.edu/mba) (<https://www.business.rutgers.edu/mba>) as she built her startup, Happy Box, from an idea to a ranking on Inc.'s list of fastest-growing companies.

“I use the program all the time. I refer to it, and the classes and moments in classes and quotes professors said,” said Redmond, who completed the **Rutgers Part-Time MBA Program** (<https://www.business.rutgers.edu/part-time-mba>) in 2012 with a concentration in marketing. “It happened again and again.”

Ranked the No. 1 public MBA in the New York Tristate by *U.S. News*, Rutgers Business School’s Part-Time MBA program is an excellent option for professionals wishing to advance their careers or start their own businesses. The 49-credit MBA program can be completed in about 2-3 years with flexible course options in-person and online. Applications for Spring 2023 are due on December 15. **Learn more about Rutgers Part-Time MBA program.** (<https://www.business.rutgers.edu/part-time-mba/learn-more>).

Redmond, 36, is the co-founder and chief strategy officer of **Happy Box** (<https://happyboxstore.com/pages/about-us>), an online platform where users can create customized care packages.

Dreaming up ideas ever since she was a child, Redmond always knew she would be an entrepreneur. While working full time in marketing, Redmond decided to get an MBA to equip herself with broad knowledge of accounting, finance, supply chain – things she would need to understand as a business owner.

While a student at Rutgers Business School, Redmond placed third in **the annual business plan competition** (<https://www.business.rutgers.edu/news/entrepreneurs-behind-five-startup-companies-receive-funding-annual-business-plan-competition>). Her pitch was for Taskmapper, an app that would lay out the most efficient route for running errands, along with the hours the stores were open. Google didn’t have these features at the time, but soon started developing a similar technology, prompting Redmond to ditch the idea. “I’m never going to compete with Google,” she said. “I’m smart enough to know that.”

The **competition** (<https://myrbs.business.rutgers.edu/case-competitions/business-plan>) gave Redmond experience writing a business plan, with the guidance of professors. But it also taught her an important lesson: that someone else will develop your idea, if you don’t do it first. “I kept having various business ideas, and I’d see them happen,” she said.

The idea for Happy Box started when Redmond was an undergrad at University of Maryland. She wanted to send a care package to her sister, Ariel, who had been dumped, but make it fun by including unusual items, such as a voodoo doll of the ex. Redmond discovered there was no way to customize a care package online. She went to seven stores to buy what she wanted, and then headed to the post office, a place she hadn’t visited in five years. “A horrible experience,” Redmond said. “I thought it was crazy that you can literally customize the details of a car online, and you can’t build and send a custom care package.”

Redmond and her sister talked about the idea of customized care packages over the years. Then, in 2015, Redmond was working in marketing strategy at an ad agency when she and her sister decided to launch the concept. Part of the impetus was Ariel Redmond, now 34, saying she was sick of seeing her sister’s ideas come to life without her by other people.

The sisters started with Etsy to test the idea while working full time. In 2017 they launched their own website, and in 2018 the venture became profitable. In 2020, sales skyrocketed, as e-commerce exploded during the Covid pandemic. The sisters were packing boxes until 3 a.m. with their husbands until finally quitting their jobs in fall 2020 to work on Happy Box full time.

The rapid expansion led to **Happy Box being listed at No. 53 on the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies list for 2022** (<https://www.inc.com/profile/happy-box>), with Inc. citing a three-year revenue growth of more than 6,000%.

While at Rutgers, Redmond worked closely with dt ogilvie, a professor of business strategy and urban entrepreneurship. The two have stayed in touch, with ogilvie helping Redmond when she was trying to source some of Happy Box's supplies from China.

"Hannah was a great student, bright, inquisitive, hardworking, and disciplined. She was eager to learn and had great questions," said ogilvie, now a professor at Rochester Institute of Technology. "She really engaged the material, and it was clear that she was dedicated to becoming a knowledgeable entrepreneur. Although she was an idea person, she realized that just having an idea was not enough, that success required hard work."

Redmond's goal is to continue expanding Happy Box by focusing more on corporate gifting. She also wants to grow profitability – baked into the business model of the women-owned company is a commitment to give a portion of each sale to charity.

Redmond has come full circle, working with current students through Rutgers Business School's **MBA Team Consulting Project** (<https://www.business.rutgers.edu/mba-team-consulting>) during the summer of 2022.

"Our Rutgers Team Consulting students knew our business inside and out. They came with four strategic recommendations, ultimately, and we will be implementing all of them," Redmond said. "We were blown away. They were so smart and having this dedicated team of extremely smart professional people working on the business ... was hugely helpful."

- Sharon Waters

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