

Life & Work with Bill Allen



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Today we'd like to introduce you to Bill Allen.

Hi Bill, we're thrilled to have a chance to learn your story today. So, before we get into specifics, maybe you can briefly walk us through how you got to where you are today?

It's been an interesting ride. I started out working in the construction industry with my family in San Antonio. I had always known I wanted to be in business for myself, but I didn't know what I wanted to do. In my young adult years, I was working toward becoming a full-time musician. I had the opportunity to perform with some very talented groups across the country, but I still wasn't able to make much of a living.

When I returned from South Plains College in Levelland, TX, where I studied commercial music along with living sound engineering and studio recording from 2004 – 2006, I met my wife in New Braunfels. With her working full time and me still trying to become a rockstar, we were barely making the bills. I began working part-time in our band's bassist's business decorating automotive dealership showrooms with balloon decor. I was able to apprentice under him for a couple of years. It was then that the Bastrop fires occurred. Between losing his home in those fires and dealing with some health issues at the same time, he was overwhelmed and wanted out of the balloon decorating business. Therefore, he offered the business to me.

Ultimately, I ended up purchasing the accounts he had at the time in February of 2012. We were blessed to have been able to double the amount of business we were doing in just a few short years. We now had automotive accounts in Houston, Beaumont/Port Arthur, DFW, San Antonio, Austin, San Angelo, Victoria, Port Lavaca, and all areas in between. We even began working with clients in Lafayette, LA for a couple of years.

We all face challenges, but looking back would you describe it as a relatively smooth road?

Up until 2020, I would say things were going well. Though, I remember making the comment to my wife, "What are the chances every dealership will cancel their accounts with us all at once? We're fine!" Then, Covid happened.

Of course, that's the caveat everyone is familiar with. The unexpected did happen! 75% of our clients canceled their subscriptions with us. Things were going downhill quickly. We had to make a change! During this time we were a team of six employees and I didn't want to lay anyone off if I didn't have to. My wife came up with an idea for kiddos stuck at home. We called them the Balloon Boredom Buster. It was a kit with 4 easy to do games and experiments based around balloons. They were easy to create and the parents loved them. We began advertising those and they went out the door like crazy. We also had a set of DIY Balloon Decor kits so that families could do their own balloon decor and not have to let strangers into their homes.

In building up this company, I never wanted to decorate for private parties and events. Typically those occurred on the weekends and, because I was also a musician, I wanted to keep my weekends free to be able to travel to play music. When all of the clubs and bars shut down, there were no more gigs to play, so my weekends quickly opened up. We began advertising drive-by birthday parties, baby showers, contactless deliveries, and more. It wasn't long before our weekends were getting busier and busier.

Also, having only done decor for automotive dealerships up until this point, I only knew a few different balloon techniques that my predecessor taught me before purchasing his accounts. In the private event world, there are a lot more options of balloon decor to create. I had to teach myself how to do many things to create what the client envisioned.

Thankfully, with my construction background, I wasn't afraid to try new things, build my own frames, or even create my own letter marquee's out of plywood, metal flashing, and outdoor lights when I couldn't find any to purchase.

Appreciate you sharing that. What else should we know about what you do?

Balloon Man is a company that specializes in extensive balloon decor for businesses, private events, corporate parties, grand openings, etc.

We love taking someone's vision and bringing it to life in balloons. We have done everything from tree and anchor sculptures to an 8' tall Converse shoe. We also do backdrops, balloon columns, balloon walls, helium bouquets, balloon arches of all sizes, organic balloon garlands, and much more.

If you read through our reviews, the common theme is our amazing customer service. We were voted one of the Best of New Braunfels in 2021. Our staff is kind and caring. We take time to fully understand what the client's vision looks like and we go above and beyond their expectations to make sure that we cover every detail of the display they were hoping for, and more.

The crisis has affected us all in different ways. How has it affected you and any important lessons or epiphanies you can share with us?

I've learned several lessons from Covid.

- 1. Don't put all of your eggs into one basket. Even all of your subscription clients can cancel at a moment's notice.**
- 2. Be ready to grow and adapt at all times. We don't know what tomorrow holds, so making a quick pivot is crucial to stay alive, sometimes.**
- 3. There are many things in this world that we have no control over. Trust in God to take care of you always and, as Anna from Frozen says, "always do the next right thing." (Yes, I have two young children).**
- 4. The team you have around you can make you or break you. We have an amazing staff, and without them, we wouldn't have survived through 2020 and 2021. Not only did we survive, but because of our team, we thrived and had the best year ever in 2021. We've created an entirely new section of our business and have grown in ways I could never have dreamed of. Our team is our most important asset and I am blessed to have them working with Balloon Man to help create extraordinary events for our clients.**

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