

## Say YES to the (Borrowed) Dress! (Alternate title: “Airbnb for Dresses”)



Borrowed By Design’s co-founders had volunteered for the 2012 TechBridge Digital Ball, but co-founder [Kathryn “Kat” Ewing](#) didn’t have an appropriate dress. She said, “I wished I could just borrow a dress from someone who is my size and body shape.” The idea for Borrowed by Design was born: an online marketplace for women to borrow a dress for any occasion. Their stated goal for every borrower is to “cut the spend by half” off of what they would normally spend buying a dress that they may only wear once or twice.

Kat and co-founder [Jennifer Bleumling](#) wore their borrowed dresses to the Startup Weekend event at ATDC in March of 2013 to get a head start on building their idea. They didn’t win, but gained enough momentum for both co-founders to begin putting real work into the business. In 2014, Jennifer reached out to a former co-worker, [Nikki Wolfe](#), to become the CTO. The startup team of two marketers and one technologist officially launched [borrowedbydesign.com](#) on March 1, 2015, though none of the team has fully exited their current jobs.

Borrowed by Design is approaching the business by taking notes from Ebay and Airbnb. There are two sides to each transaction - owners and borrowers - and Borrowed by Design remains the marketplace who facilitates the transaction. Each dress must be shipped “ready to wear”, as Borrowed by Design provides a FedEx shipping label and return shipping label. The web site enables both owners and borrowers to review the experience. Borrowers can separately review both the owner and the dress.

In a pre-launch market test, Borrowed by Design rented 25% of dresses listed, and the average rental price was 50% of the retail cost of the dress. The feedback from their market test was that their target customer wanted them to “represent real women”, as opposed to size zero blonde runway models. That knowledge has opened up several new market segments that the startup will target, including boutique dress shops, which will move Borrowed by Design into more of a B2B market, and ethnic women’s fashion needs for weddings and religious celebrations.

Borrowed by Design pitched at Startup Riot on March 4, and is a semi-finalist in the TAG Business Launch Competition. The business is self-funded.