



# SASKIA

## WHEN IRREGULAR CASH FLOW CREATED FINANCIAL WORRIES FOR A GROWING JEWELRY BRAND, SUPPORTING STRATEGIES OFFERED A MEASURE OF RELIEF

With heavy expenditures clustered at the beginning of each year, this booming startup needed sound strategies to stretch the dollars during lean months.

### Client Profile

When Saskia de Vries and her husband, Scott Kerns, started SASKIA in 2009, it was a kitchen-table side project: short-term jewelry resale at weekend flea markets and craft fairs. Since then, SASKIA has grown into a full-time design studio based in Brooklyn's Industry City, with four salaried employees, four part-time sellers and a recently rebranded website.

### Course Correction

That new website, which expanded SASKIA's reach beyond nearby physical locations to consumers worldwide, has been a key to the company's growth. To gear up for the expansion, de Vries and Kerns attended business courses. "One of the consistent messages was, 'In order to grow the business, you need to take yourself out of the business,'" Kerns says. "And I knew one of the

first things I had to get off my plate was bookkeeping, which had always been a big challenge for me."

Much to his CPA's chagrin, Kerns often incorrectly coded items such as cost of goods sold, which made it hard to tell where the company's finances stood at any given moment. "We needed someone who could put things in the right boxes in the right way," he says, "Then we could look at all of the data together and make informed decisions based on where the money was flowing."

“Having somebody on the outside looking in who is a professional and brings a lot of knowledge involving data and how to analyze things is incredibly helpful.”

*Scott Kerns, Partner, COO*  
SASKIA



## A Networked Connection

Through his professional network, Kerns met Jane Lvovskiy, Managing Director of Supporting Strategies | Brooklyn – Staten Island, in 2017. She not only took the bookkeeping off Kerns' plate, but also compiled the data into an easy-to-understand dashboard showing SASKIA's key performance indicators at a glance.

Beyond that, says Kerns, "She's someone that I can use as a sounding board for ideas from a financial point of view, like whether our projections are realistic and ends are going to meet at the end of the year."

**“Now everything is an informed decision, made in the context of our overall budget and how it fits into the big picture.”**

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## Getting off the Roller Coaster

That input is critical, given the irregular cash flow in the jewelry business. SASKIA's handmade pieces are sourced from materials around the world, which de Vries often purchases at industry shows in February.

"In the past we've relied on short-term financing, like no-APR credit cards," Kerns says. "Sometimes Saskia would put down \$50,000. And we had to think about how we could finance that along with our hard costs, like payroll and rent. We need a certain number of dollars in our bank account each month in order to keep operating."

To compound the problem, sales come at irregular intervals throughout the year, with the highest volume

not occurring until deep in the fourth quarter, months after SASKIA incurs those upfront costs. "It's insane and terrifying," Kerns says. "We've had to think of creative ways to make our dollars stretch."

Lvovskiy and the Supporting Strategies team have been instrumental in that effort. "Jane has helped us to not rely so much on credit cards," Kerns says. "She has showed us how to create a true budget and to forecast better — how to hold onto more cash and not just count on those big payday. That's allowed us to breathe easier, knowing we'll be able to pay our employees and expenses in a timely manner throughout the year."

## Notching That Growth Chart

SASKIA continues to grow — but now that growth feels like a well-mapped journey rather than a runaway train. "Having a game plan and being able to accurately look at the full picture is super helpful," Kerns says. "Jane and Supporting Strategies have been a valuable partner in trying to get us to that next place."

That next place is one where de Vries and Kerns can more easily separate their life partnership from their business partnership. "A lot of the business decisions my wife and I have made up until now have been ours alone," Kerns says. "There's a lot of stress involved with that — especially when you consider that we live together and are also raising two kids."

There's been a lot less stress in the SASKIA universe since Jane Lvovskiy and Supporting Strategies | Brooklyn – Staten Island came aboard. "Having somebody on the outside looking in who is a professional and brings a lot of knowledge involving data and how to analyze things is incredibly helpful," Kerns says. "Now everything is an informed decision, made in the context of our overall budget and how it fits into the big picture."

For SASKIA, that big picture is brighter and clearer than ever.