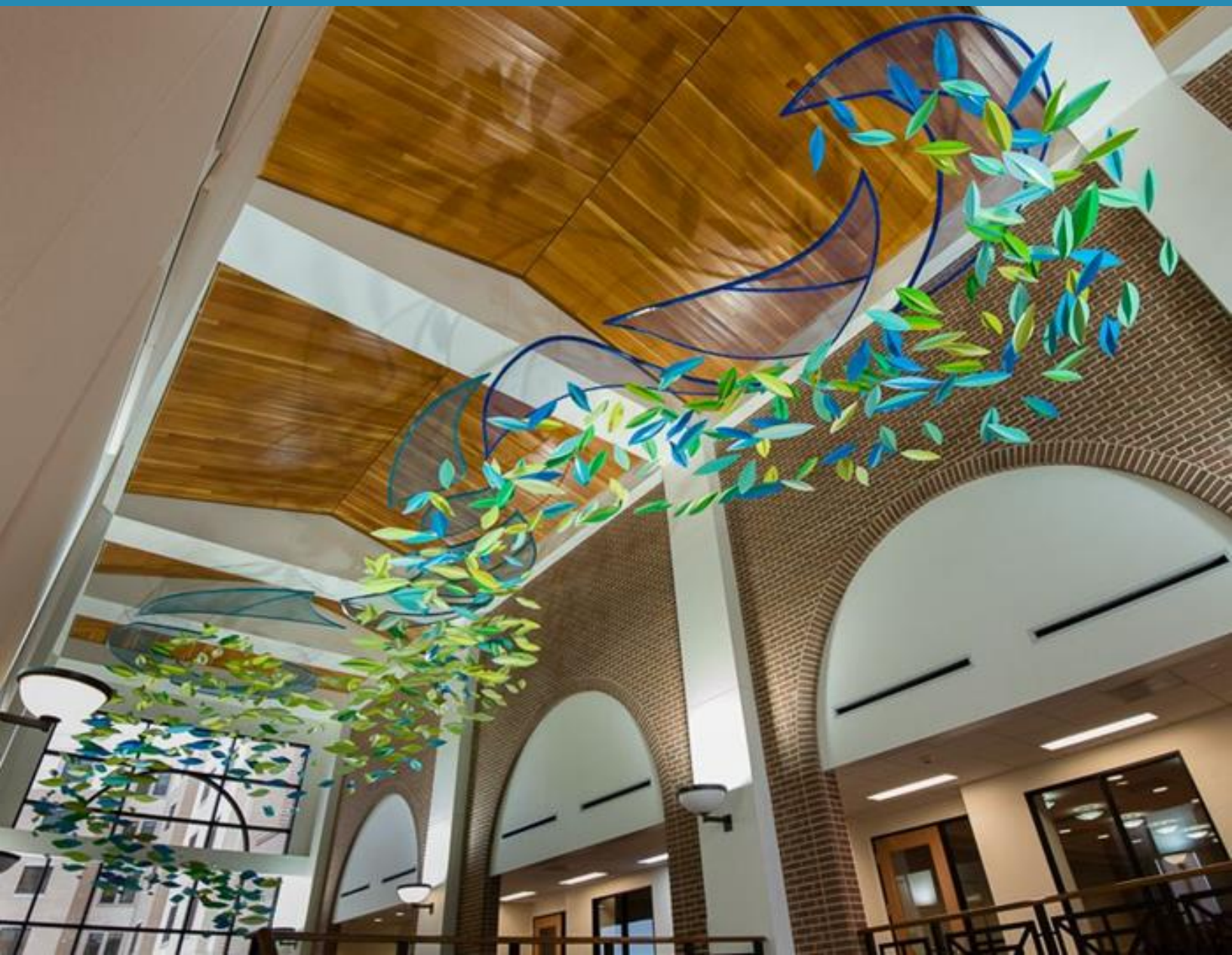




interaworks
Case Study

How Austin-based design firm Art +
Artisans exponentially grows its
business and its people as part of its
Best Year Yet

“We just killed it last year.
It was really amazing.”



“We really did have our best year yet last year revenue-wise and everything else-wise.”

“We just killed it last year. It was really amazing,” says Jennifer Seay, founder and president of Art + Artisans, an Austin-based art consulting firm that creates aesthetic environments for corporate, multi-family, healthcare, and higher education building communities with art that best reflects the organization. Jennifer was recounting the story of the one-million-dollar lunch that changed the course of the company in a day. Jennifer and her team had just made a big pitch. “I had never had such a big corporate project and I wanted that project,” Jennifer recalls. “In my mind I was just like, ‘there’s no way we’re not getting this project.’” The power of intention has been an impactful learning for Jennifer and her team in their Best Year Yet 1:1 and Team work, and this was the day the it was all beginning to play out. With their goal in mind, Jennifer says she and her team “prepared for that interview like no project we’ve ever prepared for. It was the best presentation we’ve ever given.” The team was out having lunch together after the presentation when they got the call: the company they’d just presented to loved them and unanimously agreed to hire them for the half million-dollar project. Within moments, Jennifer received an e-mail with the signed contract of another half million-dollar project. “It was a great day in the history of the company,” Jennifer recalls proudly. “Because of that project and some other great projects that closed that year we really did have our best year yet last year revenue-wise and everything else-wise.”

Since beginning Best Year Yet 1:1 and Team Program, Art + Artisans DOUBLED...

art + artisans

Their revenue...

Their team...

Their office...

The size of their projects...

...within two years.

Jennifer founded Art + Artisans over twenty years ago, and she has been bringing joy to her clients ever since by creating gathering spaces that creatively reflect the vision of what makes their organization so special to their communities of employees, clients, residents, and visitors. However, a little over three years ago, Jennifer and the company reached a turning point: “That was a rough year. It felt super chaotic,” she remembers. Jennifer and her husband have two children, and Jennifer’s father had been sick for years and she’d been caring for him all on top of running Art + Artisans. Reflecting on that time, Jennifer remembers, “Things were really not going well at the office in terms of interpersonal relationships with the team and frustration levels being really high, and my focus being so diverted and just not having the bandwidth to deal with it.” After her father passed away, Jennifer says that, inspired by him, she had a creative rebirth: “I was just filled with this energy and this realization that if I wanted to make the company better I had to dedicate myself to our team, really, and to improving the team, and I think that’s what I was looking for and that’s when life brought me to Laurie and Best Year Yet.” Laurie Oswald is the CEO of Best Year Yet, and she has coached Jennifer through Best Year Yet 1:1 work, and the company through Best Year Yet team plans. Jennifer continues, “I think Laurie has always understood those goals and has really been my partner and helped me achieve them.”



Fast forward three and a half years: As a result of her Best Year Yet 1:1 work with Laurie, Jennifer has much more clarity that she is focusing on her team and their dynamic so they can best serve their clients. She’s also brought Laurie in to do team Best Year Yet work to support and develop her team and their shared dynamic. As a result, Art + Artisans has more than doubled its revenue, more than doubled the size of the staff, and they just bought the office space next door to double the size of the office. “Looking back on it now and looking at how far we’ve come since that first year and so much of it was about triage and dealing with negative feelings and trying to move past them and get realigned. We’ve come so far since then,” says Jennifer.



As CEO of Best Year Yet, Laurie doesn't always have the opportunity to work with clients directly, but she really appreciates the special relationship she has with Jennifer and Art + Artisans. Both companies and leaders have been in similar growth phases together and Laurie says that both she and Jennifer have learned so much from their work together. In reflecting on that work, Laurie says, "The real change maker was doing a 1:1 with Jennifer and coaching her personally. Because for a six or seven-person consulting firm, she's the face of it, she's the leader, she's driving it. The things that were holding her back are the things that were holding the organization back. As she strengthened and grew, the team got stronger."

The Art + Artisans story speaks to the power of strong leadership to set the tone and the vision for the team. "I want to acknowledge Jennifer as a leader, and the team, for being open, being committed and for receiving coaching and following through on commitments," Laurie reflects. "It's been fun to see her over and over again see the connection between mindset and results and beliefs and actions." And the team has followed suit. Laurie chuckles that it's become a joke with the team to watch out what you wish for because the power of intention has been so transformational for them. In their first year of work together, Laurie coached Jennifer to get really specific and set a seven-figure revenue goal. "A year later in early January when I asked her to pull it up," Laurie recalls, "it came within \$10 of the original goal, specifically. A seven-figure goal. It was wild." And then, it happened again. The following year, Jennifer and the team said they wanted "larger projects." Laurie helped them get more specific and say, "half million-dollar projects;" and those half million-dollar projects showed up that year. "That power of intention and specifically going after what they want, that's been really fun to see," Laurie remarks.

"As she strengthened and grew, the team got stronger."

“My life has changed in the past couple of years,” Jennifer reflects. “My own personal goals of building leadership skills and putting myself personally out there and being authentic and recognizing what it is in myself that other people are attracted to and how I can be sure to bring that part of me when I’m meeting people, and having the confidence to do that has been huge for me. It’s something that I struggled with for a really long time, and that has been a big part of what Best Year Yet has done for me.” Focusing on personal development to develop the team was a decision Jennifer said she made, and that Laurie’s coaching and partnership through the Best Year Yet programming were the tools that helped her get there. “Just this whole program – being able to be open and honest – it’s created a space for us to do that,” Jennifer reflects. “I think it’s really built a lot of trust between all of the members of the team and me.” Jennifer says she feels invigorated with the focus on the team and plans to continue her focus on the team dynamics and how that positively impacts their relationship building with their clients. As a result, Best Year Yet is now part of their regular professional development plan. Jennifer elaborates, “It’s one of the things I really look for in our team members: people who are interested in professional development. I want people who are interested in coming and growing and being their best selves because then that’s what they are to the company and to our clients.”



Laurie says that she’s so gratified to see Jennifer choosing to prioritize culture and the dynamic of the team above most other things. “Now the team that’s evolved, that she’s built,” Laurie explains, “they’re all positive, smart, fun, dedicated. I think that’s where the values piece of Best Year Yet comes in: they share similar values. And that manifests in how they work together, their level of alignment, how they show up on the outside, and how they’re received by clients.” The strength of the team and their relationship and focus on growth and development has propelled them into community leadership in their space. Laurie says, “It’s been rewarding to see the Art + Artisans team and Jennifer herself being more active in the Austin community and in the growth of Austin. She was just featured in the Austin Business Journal as a featured entrepreneur in an article.”

“It’s taken us from a place where we were in a bad way and helped us turn the whole thing around and keep moving up. It’s just been really amazing.”

“All of this comes back to doing Best Year Yet. It’s taken us from a place where we were in a bad way and helped us turn the whole thing around and keep moving up. It’s just been really amazing,” Jennifer reflects. “Best Year Yet now helps Jennifer and her team know exactly where they are, and specifically plan on exactly where they want to go,” Laurie says. And the team’s plans for this year are bigger than ever. On top of designing and building out the new office space, the growing team has big plans for revenue and marketing goals. “Last year, we had a stretch goal and we hit that stretch goal. This year we’re going for 150% of the original goal. That’s 250% in revenue growth projections in three years,” Jennifer shares.

And those are just the numbers. Jennifer feels so rewarded with the dynamics of the team she’s built and the connections they have with the clients they get to work with. She traces it all back to the development she’s experienced with her Best Year Yet 1:1 work. In closing, Jennifer shares, “If you’re a leader, I think it has to do with emotional intelligence and being self-reflective and wanting to be the best you can be in that position. I think if you’re willing to dive in and try to be your best, [Best Year Yet is] a great program to help you continue to develop to get there.”

