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Big Beautiful Hair

Alex and Mimi Ikonn were heading out to dinner in Toronto to celebrate their first real day in business. While their preparations had taken several months of their time, tomorrow was the day when their website would go live. Was all their hard work worth it? They were about to find out.

Selling hair extensions online?

In late 2010 in Toronto, Canada, Alex Ikonn and his fiancée Mimi were planning their wedding. Mimi and Alex had met a few years before when both were working at a local retail bank while Alex was completing his university studies. At that time, Alex had been majoring in business at nearby York University, taking most of his classes at night so he could work during the day to help pay his tuition. However, Alex had been fired from that job in 2008 after inadvertently using his business email address for a side business in which he and a friend would purchase and then ship cars in Canada for clients in Russia.

Since being let go, Alex had sought to establish himself as a social media consultant. While it was hard to get business clients, he was hired by a friend's e-commerce start-up in early 2010, shortly before graduating from York. At the start-up he was the first employee and responsible for the company's online media presence. Always inquisitive by nature, he spent a lot of time asking his friend about every aspect of the business, including a lot of questions about how the company worked with various e-commerce support companies, the finances of the business model, and the legal aspects of running a Canadian e-commerce company that largely sold to US customers. He found the experience tremendously informative, learning "as much if not more than I had learned in my four years as a business major," he recalled. However, as the business grew in the spring of 2010, Alex felt he was making an important contribution and requested he either be granted or be allowed to purchase equity.

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