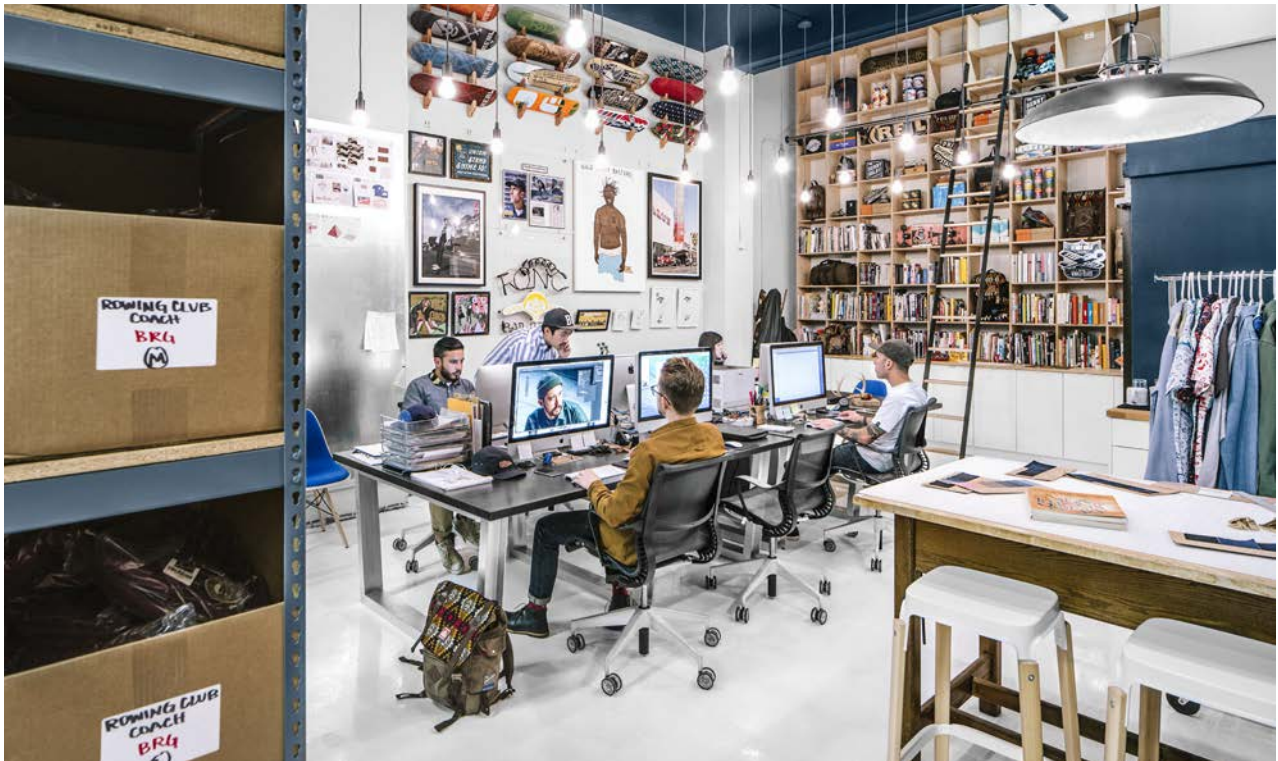




Benny Gold

San Francisco, California, USA



A symbol of youth and forward motion—the paper airplane—provided the inspiration behind one of streetwear’s fastest growing fashion brands.

It all started with a sticker.

Years before Benny Gold existed as the global streetwear fashion brand, there was just Benny Gold, the graphic artist, plastering a decal he designed as a side project around his beloved adopted hometown of San Francisco. That sticker—a stylized image of a paper airplane paired with the phrase “Stay Gold”—was a message from Benny Gold (the artist) to himself, a reminder not to get worn out by the long hours and frequent self-doubt common among young creative people working at their first corporate job. And with that message, the spirit of Benny Gold (the brand) was born.

Case Study

“No one tells you in art school that design is actually real work,” Gold says. “But you get out there, and it seriously is work. So I felt like I was getting beat down inside and I made the sticker to try to remember why I’m here and why I’m doing this.”

Benny moved to San Francisco the day after receiving his BFA from Savannah College of Art and Design in 1998. Talent plus hustle opened doors for him at some of the Bay Area’s top design firms and ad agencies. Benny Gold (the brand) started taking shape through side projects Gold worked on at night or on weekends.

As demand grew for the stickers and graphic T-shirts Gold produced in his spare time, he started investing more time in building his brand into a business. Around 2008, inventory had begun to overwhelm his house. “The T-shirt business started getting bigger and bigger and my home office got cluttered with product,” Gold says. “When it spilled out into the dining room and eventually the living room, my wife was like, ‘You’ve got to get all of this stuff out of here.’ So I started looking for a space.”

Requirements for that first space were fairly straightforward. Gold needed office space to do design work—both for his



Gold developed an appreciation for the designs of Charles and Ray Eames while studying at Savannah College of Art and Design.

own projects as well as select jobs for corporate clients, which he continued to take on until 2010—and warehouse space to house inventory. A retail storefront wasn’t originally in the plan.

“I walk my dog to the local coffee shop in the morning, and there’s this Art Deco-looking building I’ve always loved that we walk past every day,” Gold explains. “One day it had a ‘For Rent’ sign on it, so I just called them up and rented. The storefront gave me the idea to do a little pop-up shop for new releases, and they were more successful than I expected, so I figured I’d let the store keep going.”

While Gold loved the space and its proximity to his home, the business began to outgrow it quickly. With retail now a priority, he began looking for a location with more foot traffic. Within a year he relocated to the current home of the Benny Gold store in the heart of San Francisco’s Mission District. The retail store eventually forced the business side of the business (design, sales, shipping, etc.) out of that space. In 2014, those functions found a new home in a former pawnshop in the nearby South of Market neighborhood.

The renovation played up the history of the space, with pawnshop-inspired window signage reimaged through Gold’s ever-youthful point of view. Inside, a busy team



Setu® multipurpose chairs provide the perfect blend of style and versatility for the high-energy Benny Gold team.

Case Study

of employees—most of them also family or longtime friends—runs the show. At any given time, orders might be shipping out the front door while salespeople work the phones, looking to increase penetration for the brand's already global wholesale market. At a work table in the back room, Gold and a small team of designers may be working on graphics for next season's shirt designs while his wife, Hiromi, manages day-to-day operations. Herman Miller Setu multipurpose chairs provide the perfect blend of style and versatility to support these diverse activities.

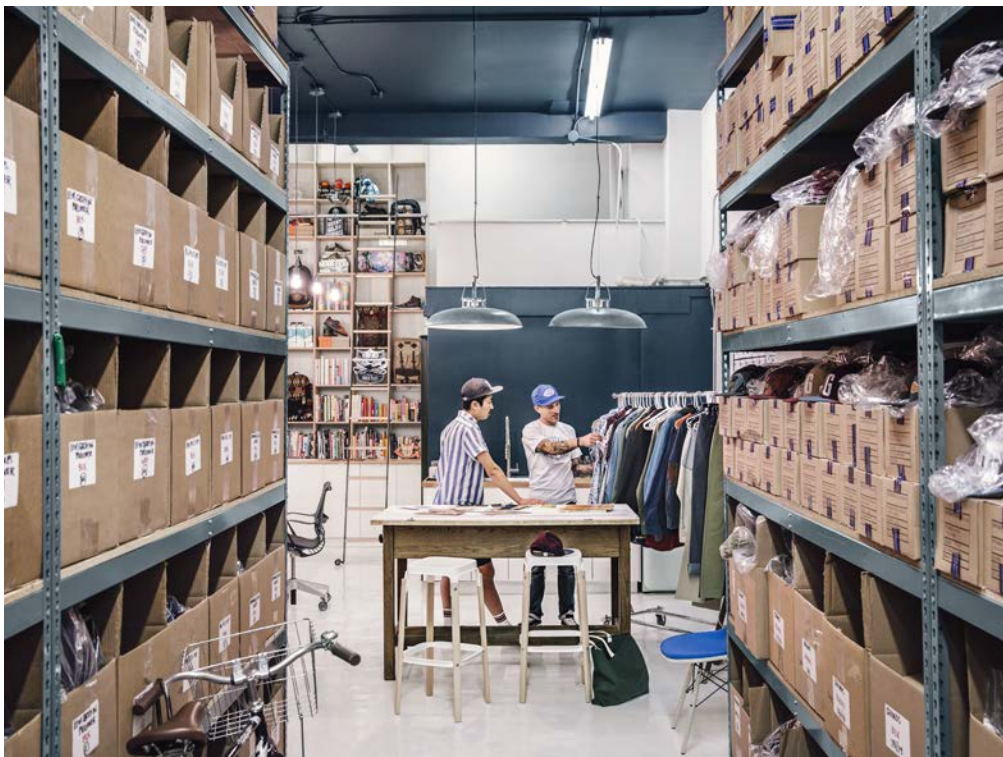
Gold first learned about Herman Miller in design school. "When you have a design background, I think you're drawn to well-designed stuff," Gold said. "We've changed offices three or four times now, but we've always had Herman Miller chairs."

The company's current space is a humble setup, considering the growth the brand has enjoyed. Benny Gold produces a new clothing collection each season—spring, summer,

winter, and fall—and each is comprised of 12 styles of T-shirts, 15 hat designs, 10 to 20 pieces of cut-and-sew, 10 styles of socks, and a number of accessories.

"When they're just side projects, you don't really care about making money on them," Gold says. "I designed a lot of cool stuff in the past for other brands like Nike and Stussy and Adidas, but on every one of those projects, I was just hired to design something for somebody else. They had the responsibility to promote it. When you're your own brand, it's all on you and you not only have to design it, you have to market it, sell it, promote it, everything."

"I'm just learning as I go," he adds. "I figured out how to make stickers from working on projects with friends. I figured out how to make T-shirts out of my apartment. When I hired my first employee, I figured out how to manage people. I take it as it comes."



Benny Gold product design, sales, inventory, and shipping all happen out of the same location in San Francisco's South of Market neighborhood.

Case Study

Industries

Fashion

Topics

Brand

Small and Medium Business

Project Scope

5,000 square feet

Herman Miller Products

Setu Chair

Eames® Molded Fiberglass

Upholstered Shell Chair


Alliance Products

Magis® Steelwood Stool

Year Completed

2014

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Hiromi Weiner runs the business side of the business and husband Benny Gold handles all things creative for Benny Gold (the brand). Gold discovered the company's first office space on a walk with their dog, Levi.