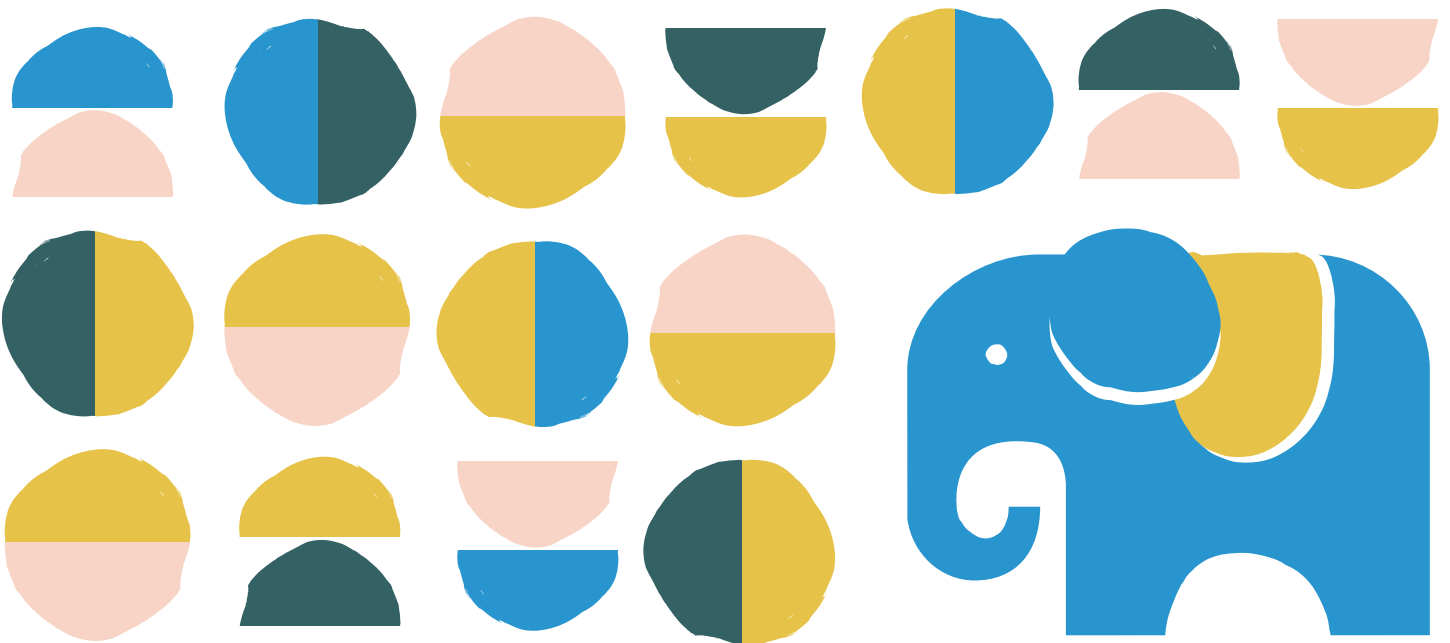
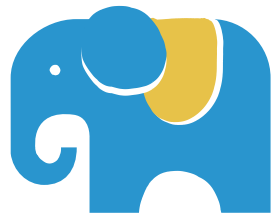


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**TRUNK  
SHOW**  
*with*  
RW ELEPHANT

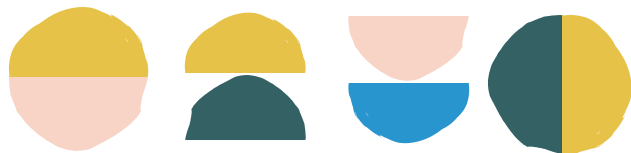
EPISODE 5

RHODA BRIMBERRY  
& ANNA CRELIA  
*Loot Rentals*





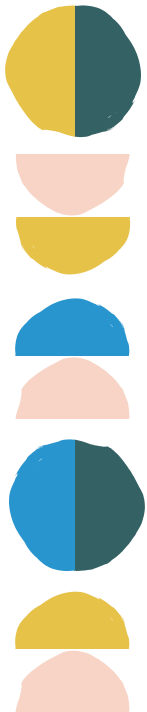
Anna Crelia and Rhoda Brimberry share their story of establishing Loot Rentals, with two locations, in Austin and Fort Worth, Texas. After sourcing specialty pieces for Anna's own wedding, the pair found themselves with a collection of rental inventory on their hands. You'll hear these women look back on those early years and explain how they develop their influential rental collections now.





## WHAT'S IN THIS EPISODE

- How one of the founder's own engagement started everything
  - Gathering a vision for the Loot collection
  - Working with family members
  - The importance of the Austin community in Loot's success
  - Investing in artisan and local makers
  - Honing fresh styles and sharing them in regular company lookbooks
  - Screening future team members and cultivating a company culture
  - Managing a business with multiple locations
- 



## QUOTES

"You've always heard 'Don't go into business with your family or friends.' I think we knew that was a risk but we were willing to take it." –Rhoda Brimberry

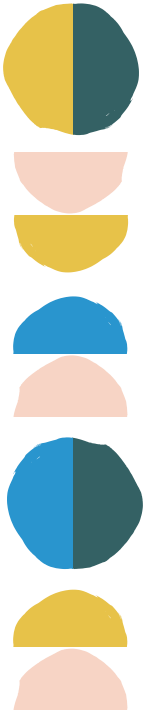
"I joke sometimes how it's like a hoarding problem that has turned into a successful business." –Rhoda Brimberry

"Austin is full of a lot of early adopters...they'll try something unusual and aren't fearful about what that is." –Rhoda Brimberry

"I feel like on the one hand, you've really stayed true to an authentic Austin vibe, but at the same time, you're also creating the Austin vibe. You're telling people this is what's cool and this is the style of celebrations here. So you've become tastemakers in your city." –Allison Howell

"I think we listen to our customers a lot. You know, we get requests for things that we don't have. And so that becomes the forefront of our next buying decision." –Anna Crelia

"What is lacking in the market? What do you need? What are you not seeing?...That feedback is going to guide my purchasing decisions." –Anna Crelia



**WEBSITE**  
[lootrentals.com](http://lootrentals.com)

**INSTAGRAM**  
[@lootrentals](https://www.instagram.com/lootrentals)

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## RHODA BRIMBERRY & ANNA CRELIA

*Loot Rentals | Austin & Fort Worth, Texas*

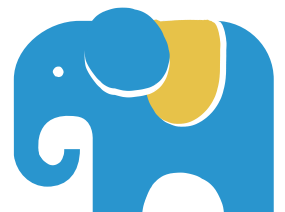
Sisters-in-law, Anna Crelia and Rhoda Brimberry started Loot Rentals in 2011. They combined their keen eyes for detail, backgrounds in event planning, and their love for interiors while staying in line with trends to create an award winning style for central Texas and beyond. They pride themselves in carrying lounge furniture, dining furniture, tabletop settings and decor that elevate events to a new level.

Since its inception as one of the first vintage specialty rental outfits in the US, Loot has been named Most Valuable Vendor of 2015 by Borrowed and Blue, nominated as the Best Luxury Vendor of 2015 by ILEA of Austin, honored as one of Wedding Wire's Couples Choice of 2016 and was nominated for 2018 Business of The Year by Woman's Way. Loot holds two ILEA Texas Star Awards, Best Volunteer Collaboration 2018 and Best Corporate Event Collaboration 2018. Most Recently, Loot took home the prestigious award for Best Rentals from ILEA Austin.

Loot has also enjoyed the pleasure of being published in some of the most prestigious blogs, magazines, and books the global wedding and event community has to offer such as Martha Stewart Weddings, Southern Weddings, Southern Living, HGTV Magazine, Mingle, Magnolia Rouge Lifestyle, Past Present: Living with Heirlooms and Antiques and Camille Styles Entertaining: Inspired Gatherings and Effortless Style.

This stylish duo doesn't just stop at rentals. They launched their boutique lifestyle and home goods shop, Loot Finer Goods in the Fall of 2017 of which has been featured in Domino Magazine, Apartment Therapy, The Everygirl, Luxe Mag, Austin Monthly, Tribeza Austin. You can shop their vintage and artisan made wares in their retail shop or online.

# LOOT™



**Allison Howell**  
[00:00:02]

Hi, I'm Allison Howell. You're listening to The Trunk Show, where I talk with founders of leading event rental businesses about their rental adventures. The show is brought to you by RW Elephant, the mighty inventory management software for your event rental business. In this episode, I talked to the founders of Loot Rentals.

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:00:20]

I'm Anna with Loot Rentals and I am originally from Austin, Texas. But recently, we made the move to Fort Worth, Texas to start up a Loot Deux.

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:00:36]

My name is Rhoda Brimberry. I also am a part of Loot Rentals and I do live in Austin, Texas. And I'm trying to manage that side of the business while Anna is in Fort Worth.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:00:56]

We're going to get into topics like working with family members, creating a company culture and managing multiple locations. All of that and more is coming up on The Trunk Show.

[00:01:05]

So take us back to the beginning. I believe the dream of Loot started during your engagement, Anna. Is that right?

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:01:16]

That is correct. When I was planning my wedding, it was very hard to find any rentals that kind of, you know, told a story or had character behind them.

[00:01:29]

It was a lot of chiavari chairs and, you know, the polyester linens on the folding tables. And there really wasn't much to choose from. Kind of all the weddings look the same. And my husband and I have always loved, and we still do, that kind of jazz era time. The 1920s, the big band music, kind of speakeasy vibe. And so when we were planning our wedding, that's what we wanted to convey. And so really what I was left to do, because there was nobody renting vintage things, I went and had to go and buy vintage china and flatware and linens and all the centerpieces for the tables and the decor. And it just was a huge job. And so I employed, I don't know...

**Allison Howell**  
[00:02:38]

Enlisted, recruited.

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:02:39]

Enlisted, yes, my family to help me in that pursuit. And Rhoda was actually living in Fort Worth at the time and had some free time to, you know, hit up the garage sales and things like that to help me in my search. And so over time, the boxes started piling up at my parents house. And, oh, you know, Rhoda was making frequent trips down to Austin and she saw the accumulation of everything. And not only is it, you know, the storage, but it's also the cleaning of the items before you can even eat off of them. So we just kind of looked at each other and really, what are we going to do with all of this stuff after your wedding? And we had the idea to do rentals kind of simultaneously. We just looked at each other and had the same... I think we were driving in the car actually Rhoda.

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:03:47]

I think we had the idea like separately. But then we started talking about it and I started saying something. And you finish the sentence with "what about rentals?"



**Anna Crelia**  
[00:03:57]

Yes. And actually, so we decided that that was going to be the path afterwards. And I was on my honeymoon and Rhoda went ahead and started getting the word out. And where we would find a lot of the china and things like that was on Craigslist, because what brides would do is they would go on Craigslist and buy, you know, a lot from somebody else's wedding. Use it for their own wedding, then get back on Craigslist and resell it.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:04:29]

Sure.

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:04:30]

And so it seemed natural to kind of post an ad for the rental aspect on Craigslist. And sure enough, on my honeymoon, we got someone interested and Rhoda emailed me and she was like, "hey, just wanted to let you know that somebody wants to meet with you when you get back." And so I was happy to meet with her when I got back into town and showed her what I had collected out of the trunk of my car, literally.

[00:05:07]

And, you know, she didn't end up booking with us. And I don't blame her. I didn't have like the showiest presentation.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:05:16]

You mean the trunk of a car showroom wasn't really the the look you're going for now?

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:05:22]

Not quite. And pretty soon realized that that was not going to work and I got to work on putting up a splash page and basically all that was was just, hey, this is who we are. We had the name by then. Rhoda had dreamed up the name. Believe it or not and...

**Allison Howell**  
[00:05:45]

Like literally in a dream?

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:05:47]

Literally, yes, yes.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:05:51]

OK. Wait. You got to pause the story and tell us that. You like woke up and you were like Loot.

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:05:55]

Yeah.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:05:56]

It has to be Loot.

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:05:56]

It's really as simple as that. I feel like stayed up really late one night, just thinking up a bunch of names and nothing really sat. And so we just kind of went to bed with the question still there. And I don't recall honestly like what the scene was in my dream that got me to Loot that I just remember waking up and it was a twilight realization. Like when you're halfway between sleep and being awake. And I just remember thinking Loot was such a fun name because how simple it was. But what it also meant and it could just carry over to so many areas.



[00:06:40] And so that's why we came up with that. So of course, we started to look around and see like, what else is out there like this? And well, there wasn't anything that had a name like that. So in our industry, for sure. So that's what we stuck with.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:06:55] Perfect. So, Anna, you're putting up the splash page and then what happened next?

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:07:00] Yes. So all it was, was just a splash page. Rhoda and I spent a weekend working on a photo shoot and photographing all of our inventory in my parents backyard. And we, I had made like a catalog, like a PDF catalog. And you could download that from the splash page. And it had pricing and things like that. And somehow a catering company in town found the splash page. I don't know how because we weren't marketing it at the time. And she had referred us to... I forget what his name is. But this guy who is planning a big 350 person gala in San Antonio. And he called us up and this must have been in... What was it, Rhoda? Was it...?

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:08:03] Well, I remember the event was in April. So I feel like we were in March that we got the request.

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:08:10] So in March he called and he was like I have this 350 person seated dinner that I need dinner plates, salad plates, dessert plates, tea cup and saucer sets for everybody at this gala. And I... So I had collected maybe like 75 just dinner plates for my wedding and the rest was borrowed from family. So we did not have that much.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:08:43] And you were like, sure. They can just eat in stages. Well, you have 75, wash the plates, then 75. No? That's not a good plan?

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:08:53] I don't know. I said yes. And I remember, literally, I was in my little tiny house on the railroad tracks. And I hung up the phone and I think I was like crying. I think I called Rhoda, I called my mom and I was like, literally in tears. I just accepted this thing and I don't know how I'm going to do it. And somehow we pulled it off.

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:09:20] We sure did.

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:09:21] My mom was... We had a month to get everything. And my mom loaned us \$5,000. And I believe Rhoda's mom also loaned us some money. I don't think we used all of what your mom gave us, but we did need some of it to kind of get this started. And the next month we just hit the ground running. We leased a studio space to hold everything. In that time, we collected everything, figured out how to store, transport.

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:10:00] Washed it. There's a lot of washing.

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:10:02] Yeah.

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:10:03] And sticker picking. We had to pick up all the stickers.



**Anna Crelia**  
[00:10:06]

Yeah. And then figuring out just how to how are we going to store all of these teacup and saucer sets and keep them in their pairs together and... Oh anyway, we did it. And we did it with the help of my in-laws who were living in San Antonio at the time, and, you know, we were scraping for at least an hour these dried candied apples on our precious dessert plate then we were just appalled and we're like, how are we gonna get these off? Oh, it was just a mess, but we had the best time. And it was just an unforgettable experience. And then I don't even think we made money on that, to be honest.

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:10:55]

Oh, no way.

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:10:57]

Yeah, we definitely did not. And but if anything, it just kind of started the ball rolling and... Yeah. Everything we made, we just kind of put back into the business for the next couple years and grew it.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:11:13]

So, Rhoda, what was your relationship with Anna like at that point? Because you were just... You had been sister- in-laws for how long at that point? How long had you been married to Matt?

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:11:24]

Well, I guess, eight years? Maybe?

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:11:29]

Yeah, because I got married in 2010.

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:11:32]

Oh, yeah and I was 0-1.

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:11:34]

Yeah.

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:11:34]

OK. So, yeah, Our relationship, well, to start, I'm 10 years older than Anna, and so when I first met Anna, she was she was still a kid. You know, she was in high school and I was just a thriving adult. But no, I was in my 20s and we were definitely...

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:11:57]

Like, I was 16 or so when I met you.

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:11:59]

Yeah. So like we weren't really like contemporaries. We weren't like on the same plain. We weren't doing the same type of thing. So we didn't connect on for a while, to be honest in our relationship. Also, because we never lived near each other.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:12:19]

Sure.





**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:12:20]

And so I feel like through the process that Anna was going through with her wedding planning, we grew together a lot in that... And she, you know, before that, too, I had... I was in this space in my head where I was starting to become an entrepreneur and thinking up some cool ideas of things to start businesses in. And, you know, sometimes there is a lot of ideas that were floating about in my head and sometimes I wouldn't be taking taken very seriously by some people that I pitched to. And I remember Anna like was very kind.

[00:12:59]

And I... She has always been involved in fashion. And I had some ideas that were fashion related. And so I would pitch some ideas to her. And she was just always so receiving of them, not necessarily that they were good, but she took me seriously and I appreciated that.

[00:13:17]

And so like when the idea of Loot popped in to our heads, I had already known that Anna was serious about cultivating new ideas and building them. And while I never anticipated in my wildest dreams that we would ever be business partners, I think it was a natural growth for both of us. And eventually we grew to be on the same plain even though our ages were so different.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:13:49]

So was there ever a moment when you felt like that was a risk to become business partners? Like it would impact your relationship negatively? Or did you... Did it always feel like, oh, this is the natural next step?

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:14:01]

No, I don't know how you feel Anna but I was always nervous about that because she was my sister-in-law. And, you know, you've always heard don't go into business with your family or friends. And I think we knew that was a risk, but we were willing to take it.

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:14:19]

And I think that it happened so organically. Like when we started, it really kind of started as I mean, I would say it started as a hobby, really, you know, because we were just kind of doing this together, trying to get, you know, some stuff for my wedding. And then it was just, it kind of just took off from there. We didn't really have a conversation about it, you know. It was just so natural that we just were working together on my wedding and then it was just, what's next? OK, what's next?

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:14:53]

Yeah. And we still kind of go like that. It just seemed like yesterday we were visiting Fort Worth again and now she's there. And so we're just like, just go we'll figure out the rest afterwards. And it's funny now because when we started, I was living in Fort Worth and I had my two toddlers and I was driving up, driving down to Austin all the time to work the events with Anna on the weekends. And it's like we've switched. And now she's there with her two that are about, you know, a little older than my two at that time. But it's like we just can't quit Fort Worth.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:15:32]

Right. Well, and it's interesting that you have switched places in your family roles too. Like, but your family has been involved throughout this whole thing. I mean, it started with the family wedding. You did your first big job in San Antonio with your in-laws, Anna. But your parents on either side are loaning you money. Like you've had the support of people around you that have really made that happen with you guys.

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:15:58]

Totally.



**Allison Howell**  
[00:15:59]

So after that job in San Antonio when you had now setting for 350 people. Was it mostly just china in your collection? Or did you have furniture, too? Did you have lounge groupings? Or like, what was the what was the vision at that point? What did success look like to you two? Like what were you guys thinking is like, what's our goal?

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:16:26]

Well, I guess I can start that. So to answer that second part of the question, there were... there was no goal. We never did any business planning. It was just this like steamroller effect of where we started with this. And then, you know, we had met other people that were doing something similar in California. And so we're like, oh, this is possible. Let's just go ahead and go after it and just keep accumulating.

[00:16:56]

And I joke sometimes how it's like a hoarding problem that has turned into a successful business. And hoarding is a strong word and not to be taken lightly. But we get a lot of excitement behind, you know, beautiful items that we would love to offer for our collection.

[00:17:17]

And we... I think out of the two of us, Anna takes... She might be more of the risk taker than I am, but always throughout our pursuit, we've just kind of had this like, well, if we ever tank, then at least we can sell that stuff off and we'll at least break even and felt like it was an easier undertaking with that kind of knowledge. So the planning, that didn't happen for like three or four years until after we started really.

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:17:48]

Yeah. I remember talking and being like, I just really hope that we can do two events a month.

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:17:55]

Oh my. Do you. Remember? Oh.

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:17:58]

That would be so great. And that first year just kind of surprised us both, I think, because, you know, we were doing multiple events every weekend and just was very unexpected and we just kind of rolled with it.

.....

[AD BREAK]

**Allison Howell**  
[00:18:19]

I'm going to pause the show for a minute and tell you a little bit more about the show's sponsor, RW Elephant. RW Elephant is a mighty software that helps you manage your rental inventory, generate proposals, avoid double bookings, send invoices, gain powerful insight into your business' profitability and more. It was designed in part by me for boutique event rentals companies of all shapes and sizes, but you probably don't wanna hear about how great it is from the person who helped create it. How about someone who's actually using it every day in the rental business?

**Natalie Peterson**  
[00:18:52]

We are Lindsey and Natalie with Coral Lane and we're located in the Dallas, Texas area. I would recommend RW Elephant to any rental company. It has made our lives so much easier.



**Lindsey Abell**  
[00:19:07]

The biggest benefit I would say, is being able to take a wishlist or an order we get over email and immediately turn that into a complete order, with the proposal, with a beautiful invoice, in less than five minutes.

[00:19:21]

And I think that's so important to our clients because they constantly give us the feedback of "Oh, my goodness, thank you so much for getting back to me. This is so easy." Everything is so seamless and quick and we're able to provide our clients with just, you know, great customer service because of RW Elephant.

**Natalie Peterson**  
[00:19:40]

I'm not really tech savvy and I was able to figure things out or go to the Q&A or email if I had to, to ask questions.

**Lindsey Abell**  
[00:19:50]

Well, and the great thing too is, is that we don't have to be sitting right next to each other to see the same order. She can log on and see what's coming up. I can log on and see what's coming up. When the app came out we were like, "ahhhh," the heavens open, an angel sang.

**Natalie Peterson**  
[00:20:06]

Not only is the software excellent, but the staff and the customer support and any time we need help has been huge. And I know we're not one of the big dogs, but we felt just really important. So that meant a lot to us.

**Lindsey Abell**  
[00:20:21]

I just can't imagine our business without RW Elephant.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:20:25]

Again, that was Natalie and Lindsey with Coral Lane. Thanks for sharing about your experience with RW Elephant, ladies. You can find more information about RW Elephant online at [rwelephant.com](http://rwelephant.com) or look for a link to the software's website in the show notes. OK, back to my conversation with the founders of Loot Rentals. [AD BREAK END]

.....

**Allison Howell**  
[00:20:46]

It seems like from the very beginning of your business, you've been able to capture something really authentic about Austin. So first, could you just describe what do you think is essential about the Austin vibe or the culture and style of Austin?

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:21:01]

I think for Austin it's all about community. That's one of our, you know, top values in the company is to be involved in the community and to support the local makers and shakers, so to speak. And, you know, everybody's just kind of supporting one another. And it's a very creative city and there's a lot of cool people doing cool things. And anyway, we're just happy to be a part of that.

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:21:39]

Yeah, I just want to add, I think Austin is full of a lot of early adopters. And so the idea took pretty easily because of, you know, they love something new and next thing and they'll try something unusual and aren't fearful about what that is. And, you know, if you just walk down the streets of Austin, there's many colors of hair, like we've got purple, we've got this, you know. Like I didn't grow up in a community like that even when I was in California.



[00:22:13]

And it's just... There's that old saying that keep Austin weird and I think that's still kind of sticks that people kind of look for the... a weird thing or the next best thing in Austin to just keep it alive.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:22:27]

That's interesting that you say that, because I feel like on the one hand, you've really stayed true to an authentic Austin vibe, but at the same time, you're also creating the Austin vibe. You're telling people this is what's cool and this is the style of celebrations here. So you've become tastemakers in your city. So I just I wondered if you had perspective on what that role is or what does that mean to you guys as you've, as you've developed as tastemakers?

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:23:03]

I think it makes us just comfortable in our skin, just knowing that whatever new thing that we like, we're kind of obsessing on, we don't feel fearful that put it out there to say that's who we are. I think Austin really allows people to do that. And so thankfully, you know, it is well received. But we are very creative. And when we get excited about a new concept or a new theme or a new color even, we're not afraid to just be like, look at this. We love it. Let's, you know, paint the walls in this and make all the events like this. And it's just... It's just a very warm reception whenever we push something else out there.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:23:55]

It seems like a really powerful place to be in a business to feel that kind of support.

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:24:01]

Do you feel that way, Anna?

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:24:02]

Yes, I do. And when Allison said that, I was just like kind of taken aback because I, first of all, that's just such a tremendous compliment. And I think that's something that Rhoda and I have always held at the forefront is to be genuine and to set the trends and to not try to be anybody else. And so to see that being recognized, just, I don't know, It just is really cool. So thank you.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:24:35]

Yeah, well, I think that you obviously are not afraid to do new things, which was evidenced by the fact that your wedding was different than all the other weddings, you know, in Austin at the time. And that your collection has evolved over the years and that you guys are even now taking risks to expand and to move beyond where you are right now. But I'm wondering, how does that influence your buying decisions, particularly inside your collection. Like, as you are considering buying decisions, are you thinking about how it's gonna be received or are you mostly following other principles or values as you're as you're doing your buying? What's what's guiding that?

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:25:24]

I think we listen to our customers a lot. You know, we get requests for things that we don't have. And so that becomes the forefront of our next buying decision. It's like, oh, yeah, we need it. We need a modern dining table. And we try to do that in the Loot way, of course. And but I think just listening to your customers is just super important and it's always been a priority for us. Even here in Fort Worth, that in the Dallas market, that's one of the things that I'm focusing on right now is approaching people here, planners and just people in the industry, what is lacking in the market? What do you need? What are you not seeing? And that feedback is going to guide my purchasing decisions. And then, of course, I'll do it in the Loot way. But I think having a customer feedback is really important.



Allison Howell  
[00:26:25]

It seems like you release groupings of inventory together or style sets of pieces together for you lookbooks or concepts. Do you purchase with those ideas in mind or do those ideas flow from the collection that you've purchased?

Rhoda Brimberry  
[00:26:42]

I think a lot of times we start that process with a meeting where we're talking about things that are exciting us. For instance, in the last one we did that we released and I remember pushing out there like I'm really feeling terazzo so lately. And I love terazzo. And so we're like, everyone was like, yeah, let's do something with terazzo. So we would go and buy.

[00:27:10]

And then whatever the theme is that we start talking about on the on the lookbook, we kind of build off that one thing really. Whether it's a location or a color or a style of fabric or something. And then we just kind of build off of that. What you see in the lookbook are the things that inspire us, but we're not going to go and buy like 10 deep of that chair because we know it's probably not gonna rent that many times, but it's just really kind of something to help get you interested and like what's behind our doors?

Allison Howell  
[00:27:46]

How often are you doing lookbooks at this point?

Anna Crelia  
[00:27:48]

We do them twice a year, fall/winter, and then we do a spring/summer issue.

Allison Howell  
[00:27:56]

How frequently or other how long have you been doing that? When did you start pushing those out?

Anna Crelia  
[00:28:02]

I started three and a half years ago.

Allison Howell  
[00:28:08]

I mean, I love getting mine in the mail. Do you find that your clients are anticipating that and looking forward to seeing what you have? Is that like a coveted thing in your in your local industry?

Rhoda Brimberry  
[00:28:22]

I mean, I've never seen anybody like ticking down the calendar days until they get their lookbooks. But that would be awesome if they did. We always have a launch party for at least one of the lookbooks per year just to kind of get people in front of those items as well as getting their lookbook in their hand. And just being a reminder that we're still at the forefront of design when it comes to rentals and they always enjoy coming to those events and taking their lookbook with them.

Allison Howell  
[00:28:54]

Yeah, well, it seems like a coordinated effort makes it have even more impact than just like, oh, here's the piece that I'm interested in these days. It's like, oh, here's the collection. Here's how we pulled it together. Here's what's inspiring us. Here's an event. Here's now all the social media buzz all about it. So it's not just a whim. It's a real concentrated effort to make an impact.

Rhoda Brimberry  
[00:29:19]

Right.



**Allison Howell**  
[00:29:20]

It seems like you've been able to partner with artisans or find other local makers who are really great at their craft. And so you're not just buying mass produced products from other people. You're also really investing in other goods that are handmade, even if they're not made by Loot hands.

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:29:40]

Oh yes, that's very true. We do honor the craft that goes into making products and do our very best to find hand makers, but also people in the Austin market and in Texas now that we're kind of expanding and supporting our businesses.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:29:59]

Yeah, well, it seems like that's, I mean, that's a beautiful thing to do. I think to support people who are around you. But it's also a bit risky in rentals because you're always balancing the longevity of the piece, right? Like you want it to be beautiful and unique and lovely, but at the same time, not so delicate that it's going to make only last one rental. So how do you find the balance there when you're looking at new items that maybe weren't necessarily built for rentals?

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:30:29]

Well, with some of the artisans that we work with, we work out an agreement with them to where it's almost we're not buying the inventory outright. So we're partnering with them. And it's kind of like a almost like on consignment for rental, if that makes sense.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:30:51]

You've had some great employees over the years and you have a really strong team at this point. I'm wondering what you think you've done to attract those people and keep them?

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:31:03]

Well, one thing that we love to do, when we have a position open and invite somebody to interview, we ask them to make a Pinterest board for us. And it's not, we don't want to see, like show us your favorite furniture or show us your apartment. We really are interested in learning like holistically what that person is passionate about. So if it's a quote you love, put it on there. If it's a color you love. Put it on there. If it's a tree that you love or a vacation spot.

[00:31:36]

And it's fun to look at the board like and as a whole vision board to see like everything that's happening in that person's head and pictures. And it's a great starting, conversation starter to ask them to go through their board and just say, like, tell me why you put this.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:31:54]

Yeah.

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:31:55]

It is helpful to relate on some level and figure out like, OK, this person is going to work great in this capacity because like they speak that same language that we speak.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:32:06]

I'm interested to know, is there something that you do to recenter yourselves or your team back to the values that you want to embody as a company?

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:32:21]

I like that question because it's, we're in a different dynamic now that Anna's not here. And so I feel like our challenge and we talked about it like the day before she left is making sure that we're always staying connected. And how do we do that and how do you start a new location that carries over the same values? So to answer that question, we practice a lot of transparency, I think, with people in the company.



[00:32:52] We're just you know, it took us nine years to figure out. I guess it's important for them to know what's happening, you know, behind our door and where the numbers stand and why we're doing all this. So we did, we did develop our, you know, our core values that are kind of transparent on the website as well, to just show these are the things that we're focused on and making sure that everybody in the company is aligned with that.

[00:33:23] But also, if there's some bumps in the road that we experience, we're not going to hide that. Like, hey, you know, if we're having a slow month here and there, you know, this is what's going on. Don't worry, we'll be fine. But just keep it in mind and just including them and all that kind of stuff, I think is helpful for them to feel more a part of the big picture.

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:33:46] And I also think having the team retreats and ways to bond kind of outside of the workplace is also something that Rhoda and I have always done. And it really builds like the family culture that we have.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:34:06] I hope you enjoyed hearing from the founders of Loot Rentals in Austin and Fort Worth. Check out the show notes to find links to the Loot website and Instagram while you're digging into the show notes, look out for the link to join the RW Elephant mailing list. That's where you can find more inspiring event rental industry resources and happenings. Stick around to hear my lightning round of questions with Anna and Rhoda.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:34:29] Anna, ramp or lift gate?

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:34:30] Ramp.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:34:32] Rhoda, Sole Proprietorship, LLC, S Corp, Offshore Dummy Corporation?

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:34:36] LLC, filing as S Corp.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:34:40] Anna, a business book you'd recommend.

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:34:42] Scaling Up by Verne Harnish.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:34:44] Okay. Is there a podcast you love, Rhoda?

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:34:46] Oh, How I Built This, Guy Raz.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:34:49] Oh, I like that one too. Who inspires you, Anna?



**Anna Crelia**  
[00:34:52] My mom.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:34:56] Rhoda, dream buying trip destination?

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:34:59] Morocco.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:35:01] Do you guys have it on the books?

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:35:02] Not yet.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:35:03] Okay. Anna, is your personal style different than your rental collection?

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:35:08] My vibe is a part of the rental collection.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:35:12] Got it.

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:35:12] Yeah.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:35:12] Rhoda, three things outside of work you love to do.

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:35:16] Swim at Barton Springs, play music with my family, and hike with my family.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:35:24] Anna, what's a business tool you couldn't live without?

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:35:28] Google Docs.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:35:31] And Rhoda, what's the next big trend in rentals?

**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:35:34] Oh, I want people to have a device hook up inside their tables that are nice looking.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:35:43] Yeah, that's a good idea. Okay, so here's my final question. You can each answer it. What do you enjoy most about your rental adventure?





**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:35:56]

Collecting more and more things.

**Anna Crelia**  
[00:35:56]

I'd have to say, yeah, traveling and buying and doing it with family, with Rhoda. It's the best!

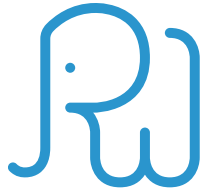
**Rhoda Brimberry**  
[00:36:09]

It's so good.

**Allison Howell**  
[00:36:11]

Thanks for listening to The Trunk Show brought to you by RW Elephant. If there are guests or topics you'd like to hear on the show, give us a shout. I'm Allison Howell. Happy renting!





## RW ELEPHANT

### We started with a BIG problem

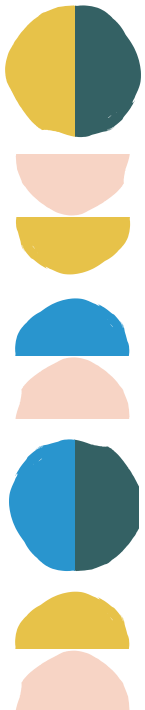
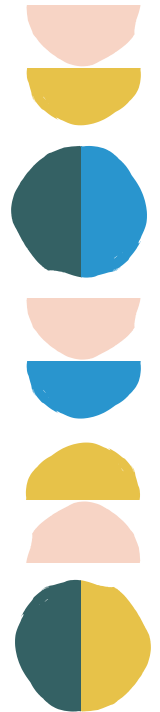
Double-bookings, crazy delivery schedules, and proposals that took hours to create & edit.

### So what did we do?

Lots of functions scratched out on napkins, a road trip across the country, and hundreds of programming hours later, RW Elephant was born. The inventory system was simple, easy-to-use, and had just the right amount of features for a small rental business.

Let RW Elephant help you show off your great products, keep track of what's going where when and make running your rental business a little more fun.

*Check out RW Elephant's mighty inventory management software with a free trial at [rwelephant.com](http://rwelephant.com) and see how it can change your event rental business for the better today!*



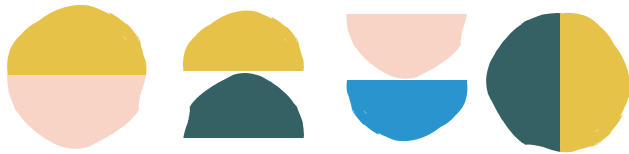
## LEND & GATHER

Lend & Gather: A Boutique Event Rental Conference is happening in downtown Los Angeles, January 20-21, 2020.

Join boutique event rental pros from around the world to connect, collaborate, and be challenged to grow your business. Lend & Gather exists to equip and empower event rental industry leaders to elevate the industry together. Don't miss your chance to sit under our expert speakers, learn from your peers, and gain new perspective for your growing rental business at this intimate experience.

Registration closes December 20, 2019.

*Grab your seat now at [lendandgather.com](http://lendandgather.com)*



## ALLISON HOWELL

As co-founder and CEO, Allison Howell is the sales & marketing brain of RW Elephant. She spends a lot of her time interacting with users, plotting about how to improve the software, and consulting with niche rental businesses about how to get better at what they do. With her background of over fifteen years in the special events industry, she's seen many business owners rise and fall. Now, at RW Elephant, in addition to providing intuitive, efficient software solutions for boutique event rental companies, Allison consults with rental owners to build the best businesses they can to reach their goals.

Combining her analytical skills and aesthetic sensibility allows her to provide a unique perspective to niche rental businesses facing a variety of challenges and experiences. Whether one-on-one, on her blog, or through The Trunk Show, Allison seeks to provide specialty event rental businesses with the best tools possible to create more success, profitability, and enjoyment in their rental businesses.

When she's not RWing, she's scheming about other businesses she'll start someday, challenging her three boys to an epic Nerf battle, or spending a weekly date night with her husband and co-founder Tim.

