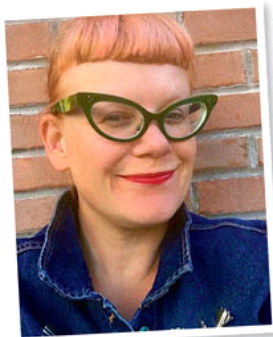


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Learning From the Best: Beyoncé

Amanda Thomsen



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I am a late-in-life Beyoncé fanatic. I've never been so rabid about something so mainstream and it feels WONDERFUL. Being able to connect with other members of the Beyhive to get really excited, explore possible conspiracy theories or the symbolism of Easter eggs together is a joy I passed up for much of my life out of being just too cool or just not finding the right fandom. Beyond being a musical genius, Beyoncé is now a total boss selling perfume, hair care products and a rather good whiskey along with her touring and branded merchandise. She was a carefree kid in her industry who's grown into a carefully curated image. I would argue that Beyoncé has a lot to teach us.

1. Let your fans do your fighting for you and when you need the big guns, call your little sister. Of course Beyoncé hears the bad things said about her, but she has her fandom (the Beyhive) to fight those battles for her. Queen Bey doesn't need to get her hands dirty, ever. If things escalate, you can tell by the tone of her sister, the equally-but-different talented Solange's Instagram feed. Solange keeps it vague, but IYKYK. In business, I've found my customers will fight my battles in the comments section for me, just like Bey. If someone leaves a negative comment or review, the real ones are on that and it'll get taken care of. If not? My sister will slide in and extract Virgo justice.

2. Stay mysterious. Beyoncé began performing at age 7 and was on "Star Search" at 9. She was teased and mocked for her Houston accent (among other things) over the years so much that now she just stays silent. Her interviews are via email or highly orchestrated so that she can remain in control of the narrative. The compounded frustration over the years of being misquoted, misunderstood and diminished would make any sane person stop opening up. Now, I only own a tiny plant shop and know that every time I've given an interview it has never turned out like I expected. When asked for a quote over the phone I now ask to move to email where at least when I'm misquoted I can refer back to know I'm not losing my mind.

3. Have drops. Have something mysterious and special planned and let people know it's coming. You control the excitement over your product and when it's available. I've found it difficult due to time constraints, but also amazing due to time constraints. (Team ADHD you see me.)

4. If your kids want in on the business, let them know it's going to be hard work but let them, and if they don't, don't make them. Your destiny is not their destiny, I told myself as my 14-year-old daughter asked if she

could get a workers permit to work “Anywhere but your store.” To what infuriates Amanda, Beyoncé would say, “Find another way to leave your Legacy.”

5. It doesn't hurt to have good hair—and because of that I've started making my hair appointments more frequently. I have really great hair, but there's no doubt that Beyoncé would tell me I could be doing more with it.

6. Diversify. Beyoncé founded Parkwood Entertainment in 2008 with many subsidiaries, her clothing brand Ivy Park, she has her collabs with Adidas and Levis, the aforementioned Cécred haircare, and Sir Davis Whiskey. My shop carries more than just plants and plant care items; I wanted to be diversified enough that people who like us but “have enough plants*” can still come to the shop and have a great time.

7. Educate in sneaky ways. Beyoncé injects meaning in every lyric and visual and it's up to us, her fandom, to figure it out. There's no condescension and it can be extremely mind expanding. There's more than at surface level if you try and I love this for my social media posts, but mainly my classes, where I goad participants into figuring things out with my guidance.

Why not take examples from the best? As I drive past my three-doors-down neighbors' planter boxes filled with plastic pansies and chant to myself “Why do you deny yourself heaven?***” because I delivered a full year of estimates for seasonal color and they never did reply. **GP**

Amanda Thomsen is a funky, punky garden writer and author with her own store, Aster Gardens in Lemont, Illinois. Her store info is at [KissMyAster.com](https://www.kissmyaster.com), and you can follow her on Facebook, Twitter, Threads AND Instagram @KissMyAster.

**These are the words of a quitter.*

*** Lyrics from “Love Drought” from the “Lemonade” album.*