

How Kim Allchurch Flick helped Bookshop.org navigate the B Corp certification process and obtain global B Corp Certification status



“Becoming certified as a B Corp can be a long and complex process. Having Kim help me through it made things far easier than if I’d been going through it on my own.”

JOSH SESSLER,
COO and General Counsel,
Bookshop.org

When Josh Sessler reached out to Kim Allchurch Flick about helping Bookshop.org achieve B Corp Certification, he'd already been tipped off that the certification process was not for the faint of heart.

As a seasoned attorney and partner in a law firm in New York City, Sessler's firm had a few clients who were applying for B Corp certification, and he'd heard from them how frustrating the process could be.

So when Sessler was brought in as a consultant at online book retailer Bookshop.org and tasked with helping them obtain status as a B Corp, **he knew he didn't want to go through the certification process alone.**

"I could tell that getting the certification was going to be complicated and time-consuming, and after hearing how happy our clients were with the support and direction they'd been getting from Kim, I decided to reach out to her myself," Sessler said.

That was in September of 2020. Bookshop.org had been in business just 9 months, but had known from the beginning that, as a mission-driven organization, having their B Corp Certification was important.



"Bookshop.org is in business to give independent bookstores the financial support to compete online and maintain their presence in their local communities," Sessler said. "We were already a Public Benefit Company in Delaware, but not many people understood what that was.



"We wanted to have the recognizable B Corp certification and all that it stands for. People around the world know the high standards for B Corps and understand what you've accomplished to become one."



Sessler said that when he connected with Kim, he was reassured to learn

not just of the many companies she'd successfully lead through the B Corp and Benefit Company certification process, but that she'd taken her own business through it, too.

“

“I liked that she'd not only done it for others but that she'd gone through the Benefit Company process as a business owner herself,” Sessler said. “I also loved that she believed in our mission. She got super excited about Bookshop and I knew she would take our mission to heart.”

”

So, Sessler hired Kim and the two began the B Corp application process in November of 2020.

Kim functioned as Sessler's guide, consultant, and partner — educating him on the overall application process and working with him side-by-side in the online application portal.

“Kim made me aware of the entire process, including the application, the examiner, and the point system,” **Sessler said. “She normalized everything and gave it context.”**

“It also felt good that she had access to the application portal, because it was overwhelming to see all the questions that needed to be answered, the different sections, and all of the evidence that needed to be provided. **I liked knowing that she was looking over my shoulder and that we were able to leave notes for each other in the portal,** and that she was giving me feedback and direction before I uploaded a document or submitted my answers to the various questions.”

Sessler said his partnership with Kim was particularly helpful when the examiner got involved. Kim operated on Bookshop's behalf, and the examiner saw Sessler and Kim as a team.





She also steered Sessler through the conversations with the examiner, **helped him strategize how to best meet the examiner's requests**, and kept her attention focused on the bigger picture.

“At one point we were talking to the examiner about the bookstores, the diversity of our bookstore owners and how we support bookstore communities,” Sessler said. “It was right around Columbus Day, which is now called Indigenous Peoples Day, and Bookshop.org had done a promotion for indigenous authors.”

“Kim brought that promotion up with the examiner, and noted that not only do we support diverse bookstores, but we have the power to promote diverse authors. I had totally missed that. I thought of us as a bookstore that sells books, but we’re so much more than that. We

have the influence and the ability to promote all kinds of topics and issues and marginalized communities. It was a great insight to get.”

Sessler said that, by far, the true value of Kim’s work and guidance is the way she helped him navigate what turned out to be a long and complicated process — one that went on for 16 months and included coordination and data collection from their branches in the U.K. and Spain.



“It’s a very maddening process, and it’s all based on a points system,” Sessler said. “Points are awarded for certain things but you can also have points taken away. You think you have the points you need and then you get an email saying you don’t. It’s frustrating and confusing and overwhelming. Kim was able to suggest ways to increase points and what to do to eventually get us to where we needed to be.



“On top of that, we also have offices in other countries, and B Corp couldn’t decide if our certification would be just for the US or not. I had to reconsolidate all the data for each office, and Kim held my hand as I did all that. **Fortunately, we did get the global certification and that was meaningful.**”

Sessler said that while the certification process was long, it has certainly been worth it, and their B Corp status has been helpful in increasing the power and exposure of the Bookshop.org brand.

“Once we put the word out about our B Corp certification we started to get a great response,” Sessler said. “Everyone was congratulating us and we got lots of exposure and press worldwide. We felt the recognition and it was very real and tangible. You realize that everyone knows what B Corp is and that it’s the gold standard.”

Their certification has also been meaningful to Bookshop.org’s affiliate bookstores and all of their stakeholders.

“Our bookstores have acknowledged it directly,” Sessler said. “Our board was also very enthusiastic. It means a lot to all of our stakeholders because they know this world of not-for-profit and mission-driven organizations and how important it is to be a business that prioritizes Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) issues.”

Sessler noted that any company ready to go through the B Corp certification process can benefit from working with Kim — and he’s happy to know **he’ll be able to partner with her again when Bookshop needs to recertify in 2025.**

“If I had been going through the process alone, I would’ve been pulling my hair out, not knowing how I was going to get our certification accomplished,” Sessler said. “Kim was very supportive in getting me through it. There are lots of twists and turns in the B Corp process, and Kim helps you navigate each one of them.” ☺



To learn more about how Kim and Mighty Epiphyte can help your business obtain B Corp or Benefit Company status, go to mightyepiphyte.com.