

A VISION to Create

Following a vision led to
many open doors for others.
by Mari Robeson



Kelci Gonzalez
Crafty Mama Creations

*“Start small
and build
from there.”*

*I*t's the kind of night you want to reminisce over and over, an evening of great conversation with creative and interesting people. This was the fourth Trunk Show I had hosted featuring a local artist, since opening my boutique a little over a year ago.

Little did I know back then how amazing a journey this would be and how many talented women designers I would have the privilege to get to know.

For several years, I had been blessed to work as an Interior and Product Designer out of my home, but I knew, as my daughters were getting a little older, that I could take the next step in following my bliss. I had always wanted a little boutique where I could gather and share the treasures I have found as well as a place where I could expand my design business. Some people I spoke with told me I was absolutely crazy to open a retail business when the economy seemed so bleak. It was my husband and my older brother who told me the opposite. I believe everything happens as it should and when one door opened after another, I knew I had made the right decision.

I also knew that I wanted to carry beautiful, quality merchandise. I searched high and low for custom and unique items. One year later I think I have accomplished that—but there's more. Opening the boutique led me into yet another business venture.

When designing for my clients I had noticed a missing niche in the market place... especially in children's rooms. There always seemed to be a missing piece of fabric that we couldn't find, or that we'd find which had been discontinued. I was working with my clients to put together existing fabrics to create one-of-a-kind bedding and crib sets, as well as coordinating all the accessories that pull a room together. At that time, the bedding options for crib sets were very hard to find. Now there are many beautiful lines out there and I carry quite a few of them. But still, there are times when I search high and low and can't find the perfect fabric. I started thinking, if I can't find it, then I should just make it! As an illustrator I began to create my own fabric designs and through extensive research I found a way produce those fabrics. This way my clients now have all options of customization available to them.

My bigger vision is to one day have my own bedding and accessory line with fabrics of my own design. The advice of my mentors was clear (every entrepreneur should have several mentors). Start small and build from there. Heeding their advice, I decided to start with some smaller items like tote bags and diaper bags. One thing I knew for sure, I was going to have to find someone who could help me sew my prototypes. I'll be the first to admit, sewing is not one of my talents.

Which leads me to how I met Kelci Gonzalez, of Crafty Mama Creations. While looking through one of my favorite web sites for inspiration, ETSY.com, I found the most adorable tote bags. Upon reading the designer's profile, I couldn't believe that of all the places in the world this particular designer literally lived right down the street from me! I contacted her immediately and she brought in some samples of her work. Immediately, I knew, not only did I want her to help me create my prototypes, I wanted to feature her in my next Trunk Show!

What is a trunk show? Actually, it started over a hundred years ago, when female entrepreneurs would put their hand made goods into a trunk and show them in the homes of their friends. I knew upon opening the boutique that I wanted to create a venue for local artists to display their work and trunk shows seemed the obvious answer. The entire concept is a win-win for all involved. The artist gets a chance to launch her business and the customers get to purchase one-of-a-kind, handmade items that they may never have come across otherwise. Featured artisans pay me a small commission to



Kelci Gonzalez



cover my expenses for providing food and advertising, but most of the money goes straight to them.

Over the past year eight local artists have been showcased in my boutique. Their stories are all so inspiring. Every one of them had nine to five jobs of one kind or another which they left in order to follow their bliss. As a former Human Resource Manager for a large corporation, Kelci left her job “security” to raise her two beautiful daughters. In her spare time she started making bags and children’s apparel and listing them on ETSY. Now, with one Trunk Show behind her and more similar opportunities in the future, I have no doubt she will be very successful doing what she loves while being with her children. You just can’t beat that.

I’ve seen it several times now, a woman leaves her corporate job to stay at home and raise her children. While at home, in between naps and preschool, she starts to do something she loves. Before you know it, she’s grown a business and she’s happier than ever. The publisher of this magazine will tell you this herself or you wouldn’t be reading this article. Lucky for you and me, she was one of those women!

As was I. Even though owning my own business has had its challenges, I couldn’t see going through life any other way. I get to wake up every morning doing what I love and it’s so fantastic when I meet other people doing the same. If you keep your mind, open there are opportunities all around you. Don’t let fear stop you from following your dreams.

You make life happen! ✨

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