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NEW YORK DISTRICT OFFICE

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Retiree "Likes" Larger Profits

New York, NY – Entrepreneur Madelyn Rich has jumped aboard the social media bandwagon to improve her small business. At 71, the former social worker, loan officer and paralegal is embracing e-commerce to increase her profits.

“I was always reluctant about using Facebook until an acquaintance said how it helped her business,” Rich said. “Now I see that it’s a real marketing strategy.”

For more than twenty years, Rich has sold handbags, totes, scarves, clutches, makeup bags, fingerless hand-knitted gloves and organizing cases at craft fairs around New York City. Friends and co-workers have long been buying her work to give as presents. Because she is tall, Rich said, she started altering and sewing her own clothes when she was ten.

She said that when the women in her family got together, her father called it a “meeting of the amazons.”

Just talking about exposed seams makes her grimace; and it’s for this reason that she hasn’t hired anyone to help with her workload. She takes the quality of her work very seriously.

About five years ago, Rich accompanied her friend, Virginia Hamlin, to a bridal roundtable at the Women Business Center in Brooklyn, NY. Hamlin told Rich it would be a great place to network with other artists and possibly sell her products. Next, she enrolled in some of the centers’ classes, and began meeting with Santos Morales, a business consultant, to discuss increasing her sales. The Women Business Center provided both services for free. Soon after, Rich started selling her work on the Internet.

“At first, Santos helped me create a website. Then we added PayPal. Next, he taught me how to administer the site, so I could put up pictures and take others down. Moving my business online was like adding another window through which customers could view my products,” Rich said.

Morales said that Rich’s willingness to try new approaches has always impressed him. He thinks her attitude helps her expand into new markets.

Now, with Morales’ help, Rich is creating a LinkedIn page. Like all the other online widgets, the platform scares her because she is not sure what it’s used for. She’s got a Facebook business page, a Pinterest account and she regularly sends out email blasts.



"I don't overdue my emails," she said. "People have said they like that. They appreciate that I don't send too many. And I think too, that this way, when they do get something from me, they know it's important."

Rich said she's learned a great deal through the Brooklyn Women Business Center. Funded 50 percent by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), the facility provides vital, free, grassroots business training for entrepreneurs of the area. Gail Davis, director of the center, said that in addition to receiving free business consulting, her clients take classes in marketing and web design, learn how to standardize prices and contracts, and explore different techniques for expanding their businesses.

"We help firms go from 10 to 500 contracts," Davis said. "We make sure their business package is ready to make that next step."

Beth Goldberg, director of the New York District Office of the SBA, said that Women Business Centers are vital partners in delivering the administration's "3 C's" to America's small businesses: Capital, Contracts and Counseling. "Women Business Centers and Small Business Development Centers are just two examples of the SBA's many resources for supporting entrepreneurs," Goldberg said.

Something surprising, said Santos Morales, about counseling already-retired clients such as Madelyn Rich and Virginia Hamlin, is their ability to learn new skills. "They retire with a 'survival' income and come to the center looking to make extra money. Whatever they make as entrepreneurs adds to that set amount, so it's exciting to work with them because they're so motivated," he said.

Rich said this is true. She still loves adventure and remains inspired to learn new information. Next year, she and Hamlin are taking their third tropical cruise together. They both said they will come back with new fabrics and inspiration for their businesses.

To see Madelyn Rich's work, visit: [Accents by Madelyn](#)

Virginia Hamlin's website is available here: [Virginia's Clay and Cloth](#)

Learn more about the [Brooklyn Women Business Center](#)

Company Name:

Accents by Madelyn

Location:

Brooklyn, New York