

HOLLISTER FREE LANCE

OCTOBER 25, 2013
\$1.00

INSIDE TODAY'S EDITION



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Giacomazzi has made it fashionable to break bones

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HOLLISTER

Annette Giacomazzi's home-grown business CastCoverz! is a rarity when it comes to building a customer base. Being a designer of fashionable, functional, slip-on covers for casts and most types of orthopedic equipment, she understands the reality that she can't really count on repeat business.

In an interview with the Hollister Free Lance, Giacomazzi pointed out that an astounding 92 percent of her business comes

Annette Giacomazzi, at right, created CastCoverz!, a business that produces designer covers for orthopedic equipment.

PHOTO BY
LORA SCHRIFT



For more stories about Women in Business, see the special section inside today's Hollister Free Lance.

TURN TO **CAST • A9**

Customer
Residential

EGRWSS



FRI
78°/52°
Sunny



SAT
80°/53°
Sunny



SUN
79°/51°
Sunny

Web Poll

■ What do you think of all the garage sale signs posted on traffic equipment?

UGLY/DISTRACT

65%

I DON'T MIND

17%

I DON'T CARE

18%



CAST ■

from unique, or new, customers. Knowing the odds are "slim" those same wounded consumers will ever return, she said her business promotes the notion that it's the only company in America that doesn't want customers coming back.

"We have to reinvent ourselves every day," said Giacomazzi, who credited the Internet for allowing relatively rapid growth for CastCoverz!.

Giacomazzi discovered her rare niche about five years ago when her daughter, age 10 at the time, broke her humerus bone in the upper arm. It was her daughter's sixth break, and it came with the "ugliest cast you've ever seen," her mother said.

"She felt so betrayed by her body and why this happened to her," Giacomazzi recalled. "My heart went out to her."

The mother took out her sewing machine and put together a fashionable sling. An idea, something big, was born.

About four years into the evolution of CastCoverz!, Giacomazzi's business has 18 branded products, including recently acquired crutch-wear items and the signature Armz and Bootz varieties. The idea is that breaking a bone doesn't have to come with the same, old cast and some barely legible signatures. They can come with a range of designs, too.

If balancing the functionality versus fashion, though, Giacomazzi was quick to point out that fashion "is not my first driver." She said it's more function and noted that all but two of the CastCoverz! products come with some level of functionality - such as keeping the cast clean or preventing scratches.

"That being said, the unbelievable intrinsic value of feeling better is what made our company just sore," said Giacomazzi, mentioning that a CastCoverz! tagline is "feel better, heal better."

Things didn't start out so upbeat for the business, though. In the first year, CastCoverz! faced a flawed initial shipment, Giacomazzi and her busi-

ness partner parted ways, and then Giacomazzi was diagnosed with breast cancer. She was diagnosed in late 2009.

"Talk about the triple threat," she said. "Most people would've thrown in the towel, but I persevered."

Persevere she did. After her recovery, she revived CastCoverz! in January 2011. As of this month, it was nearing the seven-figure mark for annual revenue, she said.

Though she is immersed in a niche market, Giacomazzi pointed out that others before her tried similar products but didn't have the benefit of the Internet to spread the word. At the time, she believes those other companies figured doctors would push the designer covers.

"That's not their forte," she said.

See the special Women in Business section inside.



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