

On the GO!

UNIQUE IDEAS BY POCKETS

Bag organizers to the rescue!

Photos by Wilbert Pasive

Interview by Kenneth Bryan E. Ortega

Text by Mac Santos



Admit it. You've had that problem of rummaging through your bag—whether it's for your cellphone, wallet, or keys. Even worse, when you have to empty out all your belongings just to find a pen!

When friends Frances Calixto, Rica Espiritu and Veronica Tria saw the "solution" to this common female problem, they searched online to find ways to get their hands on some for themselves. "None were being sold here at that time, and we wanted it for ourselves," says Rica. Necessity is indeed the mother of invention—or adoption, in this case. "We found information on 'how to make your own' online."

SERIOUS BUSINESS

They hired a *mananahi* to make some samples, and the three friends used them. "But our friends would always ask for them or buy them. We weren't even selling, but they wanted to buy," Rica laughs. Frances adds that in September 2005, they brought some of the extra stocks they had to a party of one of their friends, and it was a hit. That's when they actually considered going into business with Pockets, and thought, "*Sige, damihan kaya natin!*" They found a *mananahi* and sourced cloth from Divisoria. They then started selling to friends and friends of friends, and at the occasional bazaar.

Rica says, "We weren't even thinking of really going into business. Extra income *lang*." But as the sales continued to come in, they thought about it more seriously. The three women, who have known each other since they were in grade four, also found partners in Frances' husband JD and friend Billie Beltran. Each made an initial investment



of P10,000 and they subsequently plowed back income into the business.

They say that feedback and comments play a big role in their product development. "Our friends and relatives would come back to us, giving us suggestions," Rica narrates. Thus, they developed the right materials and packaging for Pockets.

Business has grown by leaps and bounds. They have 90 designs, but Frances says that more than 50 are already sold out. They have also outsourced more sewers who work from their homes in Taguig, Tondo, and even Malolos, Bulacan. We just give them the raw materials," says Frances.

MULTI-PURPOSE

Pockets bag organizers come in small, medium, and large sizes. Their strength is their practicality. "*Ang dami niyang gamit!* Aside from the usual bags, our clients have used them for attaché case, knapsacks, and even discovered their own uses like in the drawer or beside the car seat. It's flexible and washable. Teenagers and even professionals use them," says Rica.

They have come up with other products like bag holders, mesh bags, baby vanity kits, tidy bags, reversible big bags and reversible shopping totes. From September to December, they join bazaars like those organized by Rotary Club of Makati West, and those held at Assumption College and St. James in Alabang. In 2006, they became a



permanent fixture at the American Women's Club held every month at the World Trade Center.

Frances found that "most of the concessionaires there said that it took them years before they could sell there permanently, but it just took us a month. The organizers really like the quality of our products!" They consign to shops in The Palms Country Club, Alabang, and in Kiwi Box and Lae Swimwear boutiques. They have resellers in Cabanatuan and Los Baños. Due to the demand, they have also begun shipping orders to Pampanga, Bacolod, Cebu, Ozamis, Davao, and Bukidnon. They have also met bulk orders to Singapore, Australia, and USA.

Being in business with friends can blur a few lines. But Rica says they all know their priority: "Our friendship means more to us. We just stay open and practice transparency."

Frances says that "word of mouth played a big role in our sales." Plus quality, of course, as Rica insists, "We don't sell substandard bags. We only sell them after we have tested them ourselves." Veronica shares from experience: "You have to have creativity, determination, perseverance. Don't be afraid to take risks and believe in your product."

Visit <http://www.bypockets.com> for more information, Unit 3-A, Gomez Mansions, 275-285 Menlo Road, Bgy. San Isidro, Pasay City.