

## FROM STAY-AT-HOME MOM TO ENTREPRENEUR: HOW ONE WOMAN'S FRUSTRATION WITH A FALLING BAG LED TO A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS

**ABOUT RYDIR.** Kim Hart, a 56-year-old first-time entrepreneur, launched her business, Rydir, based on a personal frustration she encountered while traveling. As a mother of four, she and her family traveled frequently with only carry-on luggage. The ongoing issue was keeping her overstuffed tote bag—filled with everything from makeup and extra shoes to video games—from toppling off her rolling carry-on. She often faced the annoying ordeal of her belongings spilling out in busy airport terminals.

The only solutions she found on the market were bulky, potentially damaging buckles or bungees, which she didn't want to use on her moderately expensive and sentimental tote bags. This sparked an idea: a tube-like sleeve to hold a tote bag securely to the suitcase handle. After an extensive search, she realized this product didn't exist, and the idea for Rydir was born.

**THE CHALLENGE.** The main challenges for Rydir were finding a US manufacturer and a lack of industry knowledge. Kim was dedicated to having her product made in the United States to support American jobs and avoid supply chain disruptions she had seen, like the 2020 port strike. However, most US manufacturers had extremely large minimum order quantities (MOQs). With a background in commercial real estate and as a stay-at-home mom, Kim lacked experience in textiles or manufacturing. She was unaware of different yarns, knitting methods, or how to handle the complexities of product development.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** Kim's search led her to one of the North Carolina Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NMCEP) Partners, the Manufacturing Solutions Center (MSC) in North Carolina. She found them through a combination of online research and a referral from a contact in the industry. She learned about their incubator program, which was specifically designed to help entrepreneurs like her.

The MSC provided a unique and collaborative partnership that offered technical expertise, flexible manufacturing, an iterative process, and a broad support network. MSC guided Kim through the entire product development process, explaining concepts like circular knitting and yarn selection. Instead of just providing resources, they took the time to work through the details of her product idea.

The MSC's program let her begin with small minimum order quantities, allowing her to test the market without a large upfront investment. MSC collaborated with Kim through multiple product iterations, even developing physical prototypes to demonstrate why certain design ideas, like adding specific colored yarn, might not be feasible due to manufacturing constraints. This hands-on, educational method was key to refining the product.

The team at MSC went beyond just manufacturing. They connected her with their network, which included textile suppliers and other experts, and helped her resolve unexpected problems, such as a shortage of black yarn that affected her best-selling product.

## RESULTS



\$100,000 in increased sales



2 jobs retained

## CONTACT US



1005 Capability Drive  
Research III Bldg., Suite 200  
Raleigh, NC 27606-5226



(919)513-6119



[www.ncmep.org](http://www.ncmep.org)



"Kim credits NCMEP partner, Manufacturing Solutions Center (MSC), with making it all possible: "They were soundly instrumental in making this chapter of my life possible. I wouldn't be here without them."

-Kim Hart, CEO/Owner