



ONE MAN'S VISION FOR TRADITION LEADS TO \$UCCESS

by Rachel Payne

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Entrepreneur

Style Pasifika, parent company
(includes Go Nuts Collegiate Licensed Kukui Nut Leis)

Olympia Gear

Entertainment & Event Planning

TRADITION

I am from the islands of Samoa in the South Pacific. A big tradition of the islands is when people graduate, they're given the fresh flower lei along with a necklace called Kukui, which represents protection, peace, enlightenment and light. Style Pasifika International LLC was created and became the first company to bring leis to 150 NCAA schools, high schools, and over 1,000 grocery stores nationwide, starting this tradition in California and the west coast in 2003. The business grew even more with the offering of the newly branded Go Nuts Collegiate Licensed Kukui Nut Leis. Importing fresh flower leis is still a big part of our business even today. There's a lot of competition in this market today, but many of our customers are loyal and continue to use our products and services. Our business has expanded into entertainment and event planning including 80's music concerts.

THE EARLY YEARS

Our employees are very important to us because they're either our family or like family. Some of them have been with us since day one and we were selling Leis on the Vegas strip. When I first came to Las Vegas, I borrowed the money to buy flower leis from Hawaii. I sold them in front of the Bellagio until I was told to move. Then I would go across the street to the Paris Hotel to sell the leis until I was told to move and I would go back to the Bellagio. Late one night, a guy tapped me on the shoulder asking about the leis. He introduced himself as the director of entertainment at MGM and explained there was a big Jimmy Buffet concert coming up and he thought the leis would sell well. I didn't know who this Jimmy Buffet was, but I asked, how many leis do you think I need to bring? He replied, maybe 5,000. I had to figure out a way to buy 5,000 leis, because I had no money. In addition to selling leis, I was also driving pedicabs on the Las Vegas Strip. I borrowed the money for the leis from the pedicab drivers. I got the leis and sold them for \$20 each. We sold out in an hour and a half.

“When I first came to Las Vegas, I borrowed the money to buy flower leis from Hawaii.”



OLYMPIA

Selling leis led to success for Style Pasifika and our reputation for selling led to selling the t-shirts for the Olympia, a huge event that has been in Las Vegas for over 15 years. In 2009, we were a third party that sold the Olympia t-shirts to the public for a small percentage of the sales. The shirts would sell out on the first day of the Olympia. For years we had the same conversation with our contact for the Olympia; instead of sending the shirts to us, let us handle both the printing and the sales of the shirts because we can make sure we have enough for the whole week. Finally in 2019, AMI had just purchased the Olympia and we spoke with Dan Soloman. His vision was to grow the Olympia brand and he was looking for someone to handle the apparel. He asked if we would like to take over the Olympia apparel and I asked, what did that mean? He said, you guys will have the exclusive licensing agreement. You create the designs. You make it, you manufacture it, you sell it. You take care of the online business. We said yes, and that was the birth of Olympia Gear.

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BEYOND THE OLYMPIA

We now also design, manufacture, manage, and sell apparel for Wings of Strength, Musclecontest, and Muscle and Fitness through licensing agreements in a similar fashion to the Olympia agreement.

THE BUSINESS

We now also are a family owned and operated business, currently employing 7 people, most of which are literally family. We have grown from selling leis on a street corner to 3 businesses – the parent company, Style Pasifika (imported fresh Leis, the Go Nuts necklaces, and all other apparel and merchandise), Olympia Gear (Olympia fitness apparel and merchandise), and Entertainment & Event Planning. In addition to on-site sales, each of those companies includes online sales that we manage. Our goals include hiring an entire social media team with an interviewer, camera person and a photographer to create content for the apparel side of the events we participate in for each of the companies.

For 2023, we had a 10,000 square foot retail set up at the Olympia. Approximately 30% of our sales are online and 70% comes from the Olympia. The amount of sales we do in the three days of the Olympia is insane and definitely not the norm for an apparel business. The planning, ordering, shipping, and revenue necessary to order just for the Olympia is more than you can imagine. You're ordering thousands of pieces and working to sell over a million plus in sales.



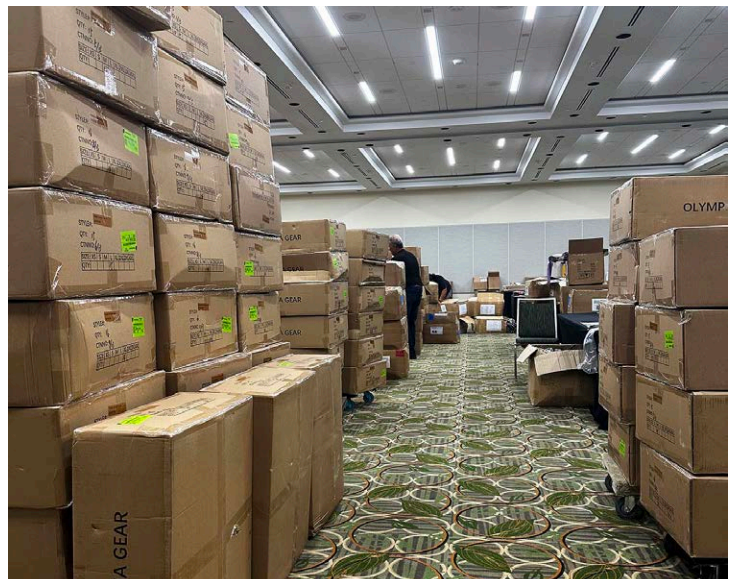


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RESILIENCE TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGES

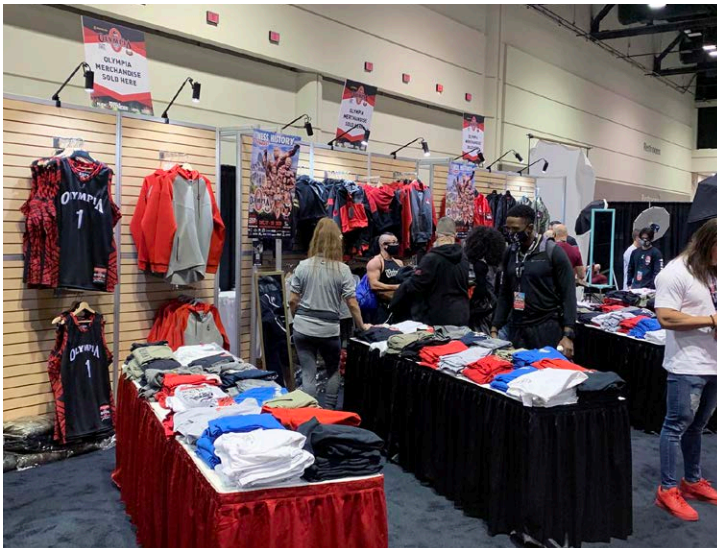
We are still a young company, but we’ve had to persevere. In 2020, Olympia Gear was just starting out and we were so excited to be going to the Arnold Sports Festival. We had our product and were ready to go. We had our merchandise shipped to Columbus, Ohio in preparation. Along with a lot of other businesses, we were told the event was canceled due to COVID. We were stuck with a bunch of inventory and had paid thousands in shipping. We knew there was another Arnold event in Melbourne, Australia and we were eager to introduce Olympia Gear. We made the decision to ship our merchandise from Columbus, Ohio to Melbourne, Australia. Then we got notice that this event was canceled, too. We had spent thousands in shipping products around the world and had no sales. It was a hard pill to swallow. We slowly put everything on the website which enabled us to keep the doors open and our employees working. In 2021, the Olympia was in Orlando. With a much smaller space than we occupy today, we introduced the new bomber jacket and people loved it! We did really well, and finally felt like our luck was turning.

Two months later, we had a major fire in our warehouse. It was huge; we were on the news. A big, new salon had opened next door. The owner’s ex-boyfriend drama resulted in a Molotov cocktail thrown in the building spreading fire to our entire warehouse. We were fortunate a shipment of graduation leis was late in arriving, but we lost everything in the warehouse at the time. We weren’t insured. We were growing so fast and had just moved into this larger warehouse. Our previous policy had expired and we had not yet met with the insurance agent to increase our policy. Another hard lesson learned. We lost hundreds of thousands of dollars’ worth of product. Last year, once again having to ship product to Orlando for the Olympia, 23 boxes and \$93,000 worth of Olympia t-shirts didn’t show up. After COVID, a fire, and lost merchandise, we were beginning to wonder if this was meant to be. Somehow, we found ways to make the business work and this will be our biggest Olympia ever. The 60th year, in Vegas, with new designs and new apparel, it’s going to be bigger than anything we’ve ever done! The Olympia takes place in early October. We’ll have enough product for all of October, Black Friday and Cyber Monday in November, and for the holidays in December. I am hopeful the fourth quarter profits will be way up this year. May and June are graduation season which is exciting time for the leis business.



DESIGNS

We have designers that create everything we print or embroider on products. Dan Solomon has been very good and allowing us to be creative. We submit our designs to them and occasionally they might make suggestions, but both Dan and Jake Woods have always been very confident in our designs. A recent suggestion Jake made was to have more women's clothing, and I agree. So you'll see more of that this year.



VISION FOR THE FUTURE

We'd like to expand our product in the international market and our growth over the next five years will be in social media. Marketing to the mainstream, beyond the bodybuilders and fitness enthusiasts, is in the works. Athleisure wear is setting the trend in the fashion industry for apparel so that is another consideration. Athlete names on jerseys, frame jerseys for art collectors, children's wear, and pet wear are all items we are looking at. We also hope to expand our souvenir line and accessory items. Additional factors we have to consider for any new merchandise are shipping and how we are going to display it.

This year we are planning to test the Dubai market. I know it can be big and profitable but the logistics of shipping product in and out of any foreign country can be challenging. The Olympia has allowed people to see the scale and quality of our products. We get calls all the time to make apparel for others. This year, we are working to find the capital to go to the next level. We have a plan and at the same time would like to keep the business in the family. It's the only way we'll be able to manage our own destiny. We've learned a lot in five short years. We've overcome many obstacles and we've grown to become a multi-million-dollar company. Other companies have approached the Olympia wanting to take over, but Dan and Jake have been graciously loyal. They've given us a project and are sticking with their investment even when offered more money. I'm appreciative for the opportunities and excited for the future.

You started out as one person selling leis on a street corner to become an amazingly successful business. You've been able to grow and sustain yourself and team of employees despite the challenges that you've had. While some of your circumstances may have been pure luck, being in the right place at the right time, you've been able to back it up and build relationships. I have no doubt that you'll be able to bring your vision for the future to fruition.