ITC WOMEN’S DAY CAMPAIGN 2020

Inspiring stories of women entrepreneurs from across the world

In the spotlight: 5 stories from Central America
Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua

Company: Gato Negro
Entrepreneur: Rebeca Zamora
Country: Costa Rica
Website: http://www.gatonegrocr.com/
Store on eBay: https://www.ebay.com/str/gatonegrohandmade

Video

Some people are brave enough to quit their job and start a new business, fearlessly following their passions in the pursuit of creativity and independence. This was the case with Rebeca, who left her position at an advertising agency in Costa Rica 12 years ago to start her e-commerce jewellery business. At the time, designer stores were just beginning to emerge in Costa Rica, and Rebeca saw this as an opportunity to devote herself to her true passion: designing handmade textile jewellery.

From necklaces and rings to keychains, each of Gato Negro’s pieces tells a story which is closely connected with the Costa Rican identity and artisanal techniques. The brand uses recycled leather, wool, cotton and bronze, with each piece undergoing a 100% eco-friendly process.

Embracing online sales channels has been an enriching experience for Rebeca. The e-commerce project in Central America has allowed Gato Negro to reach international markets - Rebeca learned how to optimize her website and profitably list products on eBay. She was also able to expose herself to different approaches to drive her handmade jewellery business towards a more aggressive growth curve in the digital arena.

Rebeca enjoys sharing her knowledge and collaborating with other local artisans. The project has also allowed her to meet other beneficiary artisans, building strategic alliances to generate a more sustainable value chain.

Customers from different countries can now visit this ecological Costa Rican textile jewellery brand, purchasing jewellery directly through the Gato Negro website or its store on eBay.

Rebeca, founder and manager of Gato Negro, is part of the e-commerce project Linking Central American Women Business Enterprises with the Global Gifts and Home Decoration Market, funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by ITC in collaboration with the Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration (SIECA) and other national partners to connect Central American women-led businesses from Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama to export their handicrafts through e-commerce channels.

Click here to find out more about the ITC E-commerce Connect programme.
**Company:** Itza Wood  
**Entrepreneur:** Eliza Babarczy  
**Country:** Guatemala  
**Website:** www.itzawood.com

*Itza Wood* is a social enterprise in San Andrés, Guatemala, creating sustainable furniture and home accessories with tropical wood from the Petén jungle. Each handmade item is a unique expression of the Guatemalan jungle and a testament to the beauty and biodiversity of the forest. Sharing these beautiful exotic woods with the world helps Itza Wood make a global mark while increasing their local socio-economic impact.

Founded by Eliza Babarczy for conscious consumers and global design studios, Itza Wood exists to help break cycles of poverty in the Guatemalan region. Before cutting a single tree, Eliza and her team of local artisans worked on the reforestation of over 45,000 trees.

The team is committed to the sustainable use of wood, as well as protecting Central America’s largest tropical forest. The brand also invests in supporting local schools, to help encourage and protect the next generation of the Petén community. According to Eliza, “true development comes through education”.

On the cusp of launching their global e-commerce website, the team is eager to leverage online sales channels to tell the story of Itza Wood’s artisans and share their work with the global market. E-commerce will help connect them with more sales opportunities and increase their social impact, providing more job opportunities that will see local families thrive within the Petén district.

These local communities are often disconnected from the rest of Guatemala and the world; embracing online platforms will create bridges of prosperity, sharing the rich Guatemalan history with the rest of the world.

Eliza Babarczy, founder of *Itza Wood*, is part of the e-commerce project Linking Central American Women Business Enterprises with the Global Gifts and Home Decoration Market, funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by ITC in collaboration with the Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration (SIECA) and other national partners to connect Central American women-led businesses from Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama to export their handicrafts through e-commerce channels.

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**Company:** Jina Gonzalez  
**Entrepreneur:** Jina Gonzalez  
**Country:** Costa Rica  
**Website:** https://jinagonzalez.com/  
**Store on eBay:** https://www.ebay.com/str/jinagonzalezjewelry  
**Video**

Recognizing the need to reduce our day-to-day plastic consumption, Jina Gonzalez decided to create her eponymous designer jewellery company, Jina González, leading social and environmental impact in her native country of Costa Rica. Jina excluded the use of plastic from her entire manufacturing and packaging process, working only with local designers who were supportive of this idea.
One of Jina’s popular collections "Oxygen" was born when she learned - to her surprise - that 80% of the planet's oxygen comes from the sea. Through this collection, she aims to raise awareness of the importance of caring for the seas amongst her clientele.

To increase this awareness, Jina decided to embark on the adventure of e-commerce and sell her jewels to women around the world, women who could advocate for clean oceans through her pieces. For Jina, e-commerce has been a fundamental tool to discuss the conservation of oceans through sustainable trade. You can buy one of her creations on the Jina González website, or by visiting her store on eBay.

E-commerce has allowed Jina to reach new markets such as the United Kingdom and the United States as well as lowering the fixed costs of her company, further increasing her impact and the longevity of her operations abroad.

Jina, founder and manager of Jina González, is part of the e-commerce project Linking Central American Women Business Enterprises with the Global Gifts and Home Decoration Market, funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by ITC in collaboration with the Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration (SIECA) and other national partners to connect Central American women-led businesses from Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama to export their handicrafts through e-commerce channels.

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Company: Rengifo
Entrepreneur: Carmen Rengifo de Martinez
Country: El Salvador
Store on eBay: https://www.ebay.com/str/rengifocollection
Video

Rengifo was born from the idea to create a responsible and committed brand for a more supportive society. Its business model focuses on providing decent working conditions which allow all employees to attend to family needs while being awarded fair pay and flexible working hours. Rengifo encourages respect and empathy among its workers, taking good care of the needs of their female artisans. This inclusive business model strongly encourages a more human and direct relationship, empowering women at work.

This micro-enterprise from El Salvador produces accessories, jewellery and home decoration items. Each piece is unique, original and exclusive. Rengifo reclaims local and natural materials, like natural fibres for their handbags or natural stones for their jewellery, avoiding plastic or glass.

At Rengifo, female artisans are brought into the spotlight. They contribute to the unique character of the brand’s products, paying close attention to every single detail and producing handicrafts made with natural materials.

In this way, Rengifo provides decent work to the women that need it most, offering a place to develop and unfold their sleeping potential. By building their online presence on eBay and their as part of this project, they achieved a much higher number of sales, allowing the brand to increase the income of female artisans working from home, and hire an additional person.
Carmen, the owner and founder of the company, has been busy training the artisans with the most extensive experience, turning them into team leaders. During her journey as an entrepreneur, she realized that these women needed a place to train themselves, evolve, and to share the values they carry.

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Company: Serafines
Entrepreneur: Ángela Huergo
Country: Nicaragua
Store on eBay: https://www.ebay.com/str/serafinesart
Video

Serafines Art provides a new concept of craftsmanship to the female artisans of Nicaragua who are in search of an alternative approach to colour and form. Serving a niche market with its wooden figures, the designs of Serafines Art arise from different creative plots, offering an avant-garde aesthetic that embraces both the Latin American and European culture, combined with Caribbean brushstrokes. These carved figures and hand-painted cedar wood pieces are truly unique, reflecting the individual characters of Serafines Art's designers and artisans.

Female artisans lie at the heart of this company. Decision-making is a collective process where everyone's ideas are respected. This results not only in an improved economic well-being and closer relationship amongst workers, but it also helps increase the self-confidence of these women when working or facing new challenges in life.

Embracing e-commerce has not only helped Serafines Art to reach new clients and markets beyond their natural environment, but to become increasingly curious about a world that was not accessible before, further fueling the creativity of their female artisans. By improving its digital content and better understanding e-commerce, the company now has the chance to present itself to the world on eBay, increase its sales and explore new markets.

Serafines Art is a beneficiary company of the e-commerce project Linking Central American Women Business Enterprises with the Global Gifts and Home Decoration Market, funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by ITC in collaboration with the Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration (SIECA) and other national partners to connect Central American women-led businesses from Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama to export their handicrafts through e-commerce channels.

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