



### LaLaLuxe

Los Angeles, CA

(800) 261-0429

[www.lalaluxe.com](http://www.lalaluxe.com)



For more information or to sign up  
for a free consulting session,  
go to [www.smcsbdc.org](http://www.smcsbdc.org) or  
call (310) 434-3566.



The Lead Center for the Los Angeles Regional SBDC Network is operated by Long Beach Community College District. The Small Business Development Centers are funded by the U.S. Small Business Administration, the California Community Colleges Economic & Workforce Development Program, and center host institutions. Funding is not an endorsement of any product, opinion, or service. All Federal and State funded programs are extended to the public on a nondiscriminatory basis. Special arrangements for individuals with disability will be made if requested in advance.

## SUCCESS STORY #603:

# A PASSION FOR SHOPPING BECOMES A BUSINESS

## Small Business Development Center hosted by Santa Monica College

LaLaLuxe • Los Angeles, CA

### BEFORE:

As a teacher, Nicole Pollard spent her summer vacations traveling to places like London, Italy and Japan, where she indulged her passion for shopping. She thought about starting a business hosting luxury shopping tours overseas, until a friend suggested she focus on her native Los Angeles. In February 2008, Pollard came to the Santa Monica SBDC for help financing her startup and completing her business plan.

### BEST ADVICE:

Pollard took workshops on sales and marketing, writing a business plan and using QuickBooks. She met with SBDC Business Advisor Monica Rayes for sales and marketing consulting on everything from approaching clients to developing a Web site and building a brand. "Monica has supported, encouraged and given me the tools needed to create a successful business," says Pollard. "She is always available to help me prepare for an important meeting, discuss sales strategy or give me a quick pep talk over the phone."

### LESSONS LEARNED:

- **Know when to get help.** "I had a business plan, but I knew it wasn't good, and I didn't know what to do," says Pollard. A business plan writing class from SBDC Director Michelle King helped her get "unstuck."
- **Bootstrap your business.** Pollard came to the SBDC for help with financing. Instead of seeking a loan, SBDC Business Advisor Ron Sardisco urged her to revamp her business plan and figure out how to start on a shoestring—advice that positioned LaLaLuxe for success in a recession.
- **Be confident.** Perhaps Rayes' biggest role was building her client's confidence. "I work with royalty and celebrities, and that can be intimidating," Pollard explains. "Monica helped me gain confidence and prepare for meetings with my biggest customers."

### AFTER:

LaLaLuxe launched in July 2008; in the past year, sales have increased 200 percent. The company still offers shopping tours, but Pollard quickly found that personal shopping and concierge services were what clients wanted most. With a staff of five and a roster of contacts, LaLaLuxe helps affluent clients do everything from choosing a wardrobe or planning a party to finding a Pilates instructor or a personal chef.

Rayes is proud of the success Pollard has achieved in less than a year and a half. "She understands what it takes to be a business owner," Rayes says. "She's willing to put in the hard work, ask the right questions and learn from others."

Pollard's ultimate goal is to establish LaLaLuxe as a luxury lifestyle brand. "I want a bigger company, and I know it's possible," says Pollard. "From essential business planning during my launch to helping me navigate the day-to-day, the SBDC has been a crucial factor in the success of LaLaLuxe. They have shaped my company and showed me what it could be."