



PJ Pan

How one unsuccessful shopping trip turned into a business idea...

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hen Pandora Stormonth-Darling set out on her

lunch break one afternoon to search for some new pyjamas, little did she know that she would return empty handed, but with a head full of ideas. Working in Central London, although full of bustling shops, Pandora couldn't find anything that fit her requirements, and when she mentioned it to friends and colleagues over the coming days, they were all in agreement that beautiful, well-fitting, well-made nightwear in quality fabrics had become hard to find.

Taking the brave decision to drop a day at work to focus on the project, Pandora started her company, PJ Pan. Throwing herself into the unknown world of nightwear, she confirmed there was a gap in the market for her new products.

Heading off to a fabric fair in Paris she found a Turkish company producing exactly the type of cottons she was looking for and they recommended a Turkish manufacturer who helped to give Pandora a true idea of costs and, to her relief, PJ Pan became a viable business venture.

Very particular about the fabric quality she uses, Pandora spends a huge amount of time

sourcing, comparing and testing each cotton and silk. 'Twice a year we head off to Paris to Premiere Vision which is an enormous fabric fair where all the world's top fabric mills exhibit their latest collections,' explained Pandora, 'It's a mind-blowing experience! We work with a handful of European mills who specialise in different areas from beautiful fine two fold cottons to super soft brushed cottons.'

After manufacturing in Turkey for two years Pandora realised just how much she valued British-made products – and how much her customers valued them too. 'I knew logistically it would make things simpler to have everything here in the UK and that it would make it far easier for me to manage deliveries, keep a closer eye on quality control and be able to visit the factory more often,' revealed Pandora, 'I was repeatedly told it wouldn't be possible due to the costs involved, but I thought it was worth at least exploring the option.'

Calling a list of UK factories one by one, her meticulous research paid off, 'The challenging thing wasn't finding someone to manufacture the products, it was finding a factory that could meet our demanding standards of finish, whilst matching that with our pricing objectives. We finally struck gold with a wonderful family run British factory. After a few months of sampling and getting to know them, we took the plunge and moved everything over here – probably our biggest achievement so far!'

Placing a huge amount of importance on her customer service offering, Pandora has seen the industry become more and more automated and ensures there's a real person on the end of the phone to her customers.

I was fortunate to work for The Admirable Crichton for many years, one of London's top events companies, and one of the founders, Johnny Roxburgh, used to regularly say 'we don't do fine'. It's a fantastic benchmark for any business. We strive to get everything as exacting as possible. If it's nearly right, it's not right.'

For more information about PJ Pan head to: www.pjpan.co.uk

