

Hawai'i SBDC Success Story - Maui Center

Penny Dant of Pukalani, Maui has something special up her sleeves. Her business, **Maui Mini Aloha** MauiMiniAloha.com, designs and produces origami fabric mini-aloha shirts. Originally conceived as Maui mementos and Christmas tree ornaments, the unique detail and quality, using authentic aloha shirt fabric and buttons, has elevated the mini-shirts to be sought out as collectables, custom designs event memorabilia and even as unique “money holder cards” for graduations and birthdays. Started in

December 2013 at Penny’s dining room table, today, she employs five and her products can be found in over 30 retail locations. The company has been a standout performer at the annual Made In Maui County Festival, one of the largest product shows in the State of Hawaii, where most recently she won second place for booth design from over 140 other vendors.



Penny engaged the Maui SBDC in early 2016 when her sales started to plateau and she entertained dropping her wholesale prices. A quick analysis revealed that there was not much profit margin to sacrifice. Even more telling was identifying which of her retailers were performing and which ones could be replaced by better performing partners. Retail partner assessment also opened other doors to even more selling partners –restoring and surpassing the previous sales levels. The same analysis also motivated product development into more lines and even “sets” of mini-aloha shirts: the wedding series (both custom and sets) and the coffee series.

With the Hawaii SBDC’s counseling, Penny focuses “On”

her business rather than just “In” her business using metrics to determine what is happening. ***“SBDC not only provided needed subject matter expertise but motivated me to get into a personally uncomfortable area – looking at ‘numbers’. That enabled me to make sense of what was happening and control things,”*** says Penny.

The next challenge for Penny is to develop a long-term strategy with the desire that the business continue to grow and provide jobs. SBDC is currently working on that with Penny and you can bet that she has more surprises up her sleeves.