



Pouchee

Anita Crook openly admits she is not the world's most organized person, but this alleged character shortcoming is steering Crook's booming business, the Pouchee. "Pouchee's 15 pockets inside and out keep your cell phone, lipstick, checkbook, keys, credit cards and more right at your fingertips," says Crook.

Pouchee began the old fashioned way. Crook saw a need and decided to fill it herself. "Hunting for my keys, lipstick, or what have you makes me crazy," she says. "That's why I used to spend days hunting for just the right organizer handbag, had to have all the right pockets. Problem? Once I got my bag organized the way I wanted, it was way too much trouble to change bags. So I was stuck with the basic black bag with every outfit. Then it happened. My son gave me a great, trendy bag for Christmas and I loved it, but it had no pockets, just one great big empty hole. How do I tell my son that I will never

use his lovely gift? Well, I did what any good mom would do, I created the Pouchee to organize his gift."

Crook designed the first Pouchees and took them from door to door in Greenville. "I am not a sales person. The thought of showing anyone my Pouchees made my knees weak, but with fear, trembling, and a lot of prayer, I took my first Pouchees into the local boutiques. For the first several months I was going from store to store with Pouchees in my car and unbelievably everyone bought them and many of them are still selling them today."

While Crook may have stumbled into the business world purely by accident and late in life, her Pouchees have taken off way beyond her expectations; "I oversee every step of the process in my business. In the beginning, I worked out of my home and did everything, from the bookkeeping, order processing and shipping out of my garage, but now I

have four terrific employees and together we work to give our customers a great product and excellent customer service."

Pouchees have since traveled way beyond Greenville. Now 1,600 stores in the US, Canada, and elsewhere are carrying and selling the bags.

For other people who might be considering starting new businesses, Crook offers this advice, "Take chances, but be smart about it. I am very conservative about spending money — I have a no frills attitude. If it's not a person or item that will help grow the business, I figure we don't need them/it. This has enabled me to grow my business debt free, which in turn allows me to take chances with styles and products."

When you ask Anita Crook if running this business has been her lifelong dream, Crook replies, "Ha! Never!" ■

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