

Rina J. Arráez Mogollón

Founder and CEO, ALCES 1012

VENEZUELA



“I am engaged in promoting products that recognize the cultural heritage and local handicrafts also ensuring the efficient use of local products that are biodegradables”



Rina's business venture started when her cousin, experiencing economic hardship, asked Rina to find her any job. Knowing her cousin's skills in the ancestral tradition of basket weaving, Rina got the idea that her cousin could weave baskets popular in the country for the elaboration of floral bouquets and similar decorations. The baskets are woven from biodegradable reeds such as 'caña brava', 'magüey', 'carrizo', and 'juajilla', all native to the region, whose manipulation requires traditional knowledge and special skills. At the end of her workday at a public institution, Rina would visit the local florists and home decoration magazines to sell the baskets. Soon, they were struggling to meet the fast-growing demand and family and other local community members started partaking and benefiting from the business' success. After consulting with her family, Rina decided to quit her secure eight to five job and dedicated all her energy and time to 'mi emprendimiento' as she likes to call it. "A conventional job might give you financial security, but being an entrepreneur allows you to pursue your passion and to become independent from the constraints set by someone else, enabling for a better quality of life", says Rina.

Keeping up with using natural products for the development of new commercial lines, Rina decided to utilize the same traditional technique to make a handbag from jute for her personal use. Jute (and sisal) are used to make bags to transport bulk root vegetables, such as potatoes, cassava, cocoyam, and onion. Rina's jute bag started to attract positive attention with people approaching her to ask where it had been bought. Observing a potential new market, Rina proceeded to design/conceive her "Women's Fashion Line" including a bag, a purse, and a matching pair of shoes, all made of the same fiber and sought local people with similar passion and dedication for them to manufacture the kit.

Soon, Rina also realized another business opportunity in manufacturing Venezuelan woven sandals known as "alpargatas" (espadrilles), which are immensely popular especially in the rural areas. Bringing the customers closer to the traditional culture of Venezuela has been one of Rina's main aspirations, and so Rina

identified a group of young artisans who manufactured espadrilles. Forming a business partnership, Rina's company provided them the raw materials and designs to produce espadrilles from cotton in different presentations and a material known as microporosa for the sole. Creating a more vanguard model of espadrilles opened new business opportunities and enabled Rina to expand her business to the urban market, while maintaining the principle to manufacture the shoes in a traditional manner, keeping in contact with the local culture and promoting responsible consumption. In 2016, Rina participated in the Empretec Training Programme, which encouraged her to formalize her business and set up ALCES 1012. The company has grown rapidly: from six employees to today's 20 staff and additional 35 suppliers, and to having sale contracts with multiple resellers, including department stores with national coverage. ALCES 1012 uses personal visits, e-commerce and social networks to promote and sell their products, and the company has recently received their first export orders. Rina is very proud of her venture, there is an excellent team spirit, supporting each other in both personal and professional aspects. Of the employees at ALCES 1012, 60% of staff and 40% of the management positions are women.

Rina has a degree in marketing and took several training courses leading to strengthen her management entrepreneurial skills, including the Empretec training. It provided her with inspiration and keys to formalize her company. Very grateful to Empretec, Rina and her company are fully committed to promote reinforcing their cultural roots, the value of artisanal work, and the efficient use of local, environmentally-friendly raw materials. For the long term she envisages to develop a franchise.



ALCES 1012

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