

Ooh, Ahh...

Baby Bella Maya

So. A new customer is visiting your store, and she's a new mom. For the second time (all moms are first-timers for a newborn, aren't they?).

And being the practical parent, she's reusing her baby carrier –only the look of it seems a little dated, a little, well, old. And, being the stylish woman that she is, she's wondering how she can add a little pizzazz to the old thing – easily and affordably. She's thinking about making something herself ... and here's where you tell her that Marta Sala-Rothwell has already taken care of *that* for her. "Come with me," you say...

And here it is. Marta is founder of Baby Bella Maya, and she designs fashionable slip covers to update her own baby carrier, prolonging its life, too –for all the same reasons as your new customer. "I couldn't go anywhere without someone commenting on how much they loved it, asking where they could get one," Marta says. "So I started Baby Bella Maya, named after my beautiful baby daughter Maya. Our first year,

we won JPMA's (Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association) 2005 Best Innovation award."

Every year since, Baby Bella Maya's business grows despite the current economic uncertainty. The product line has expanded to include designer baby booties, blankets, car seat covers, leggings, gift sets, headbands and ruffled diaper covers in addition to the original front pack carrier covers. And loyal customers testify, "*My Baby Bella Maya toddler car seat cover is so well made and really helps to make that ugly car seat so much better!*"; "*I am hooked on Baby Bella Maya booties!*" "*Thank you for your excellent customer service!*"

Most recently, Marta and managing partner Lynn Barber introduced a new line of toddler footwear available in sizes 12 to 24 months. Named for Marta's second daughter, Mi Mica embodies the Baby Bella Maya signature style while providing the kind of protection new walking children need. "After countless requests for larger sizes of our popular booties, I have to say I'm pretty pleased with the result," Marta says. Designed with a slip resistant sole, the shoes are treated with a special clear coating to help protect them against scuffs, dirt and frays. "I think what resonates about this line is that it offers both style and function at an affordable price. When moms are making tough decisions about what to buy, Mi Mica walkers are guilt free. At only \$12 a pair, we find our customers are grateful to have a choice that works with tight budgets -and toddler comfort."



KEEPING BUSINESS FRESH

Baby Bella Maya can now be found in over 1,000 stores throughout the United States. The company has embraced ecommerce from the start, and is now exploring all that the virtual community of the Internet can hold. "We recognize that social media is extremely important to our business," Marta says. "We want to hear what our customers want, need and are talking about." Almost 14,000 customers have already connected with Baby Bella Maya through Facebook



New Mi Mica footwear



(facebook.com/BabyBellaMaya), where they can find posts on shopping specials and new product introductions. "We also have a blog (babybellamaya.blogspot.com) and a Twitter page (twitter.com/BabyBellaMaya) to expand on our FB audience and keep in touch." The company stays virtual savvy by following bloggers relevant to the product category and cutting edge social media news sites. "We are currently developing video platforms such as YouTube to communicate with our customers as well, so stay tuned."

Yet for Marta, when it comes to connecting with her customers nothing can replace the power –and pleasure– of the personal touch. "We are simply irresistible to anyone who sees our

products in person, where they can see and feel the sincere 'ooh factor' that our products possess," she says. "The very comments that inspired me to start the company over five years ago are the same ones I hear over and over from moms who have had the fortune of getting one of our products as a gift or seeing one on the street or in a store."

And *this* is why you guide your new customer to the Baby Bella Maya brand. Marta agrees. "Our customer base is growing; the more we grow, the more you can expect to hear those ooh's and ahh's from moms, grandmothers and gift givers who shop in your store."

-written by Janet Muniz 