

# Alicia Vanderschuere:

*Strong, Determined, Feminine, Confident*

Chereen Langrill

**S**trong and determined. Feminine and confident. A do-er who knows how to rally others in order to get things done. All of these qualities describe Alicia Vanderschuere (pronounced Van-der-sheer), the founder and CEO of Rosie Made, a Meridian-based online company that sells products made by women. The iconic image of Rosie the Riveter serves as the company's inspiration, and it is a fitting choice because Vanderschuere and Rosie share many common traits.



"I think Rosie the Riveter is such an inspiration to women. She's so iconic and powerful. And I love that she is connected to manufacturing."

Rosie represented the solution to a problem created during World War II, when many men from the country's workforce left to fight in the war. As a result many industrial jobs were vacated, and a national advertising campaign was launched to recruit women to fill those positions. Rosie the Riveter became the image of that effort: A strong, confident and beautiful woman whose portrait was displayed beneath the words "We can do it!"

Vanderschuere had her own "We can do it" moment

*"I wanted to create a socially conscious company that would help women domestically."*

in November, 2012, when she launched Rosie Made in Meridian. She left behind a successful career as a management-level buyer and took a leap of faith to start her own business in order to shine the spotlight on products made in the United States by women. Although the company is still in its infancy, vendors have already discovered it's something worth joining. By mid-February the company had vendors from eight states, and the list continues to grow on a steady basis. It's a new adventure for Vanderschuere, and one she finds exhilarating.

Growing up in Eastern Washington, Vanderschuere learned how to work hard at a young age. She would spend summers helping out on her grandparents' farm. In the evenings and during breaks her grandmother would teach her how to sew (she made her own prom dresses and even sewed a swimsuit).

When the time came to think about college, Vanderschuere decided to pursue two degrees from the University of Idaho: Business Marketing and Clothing Textiles and Design.

"I've always been a contingency planner." Vanderschuere spent her college years building a foundation for her future. She completed four internships while in college, including one at Fred Meyer. After she graduated

from U of I in December, 2001, she immediately landed a job as an assistant buyer with Fred Meyer in Portland, Ore. She advanced steadily, first as an assistant buyer of seasonal merchandise, then in housewares. While finances are typically tight for recent college graduates, Vanderschuere was in a unique position fresh out of college to have access to all the hottest housewares merchandise at employee discount prices. "I had probably the best stocked kitchen of anyone I know, and during that time a lot of my friends were getting married and I was able to get them awesome wedding presents," she said.

Life was good for Vanderschuere. Working as a buyer meant she traveled frequently and had the chance to visit places like China, Thailand and Hong Kong. "I used to tell people that buying was the best thing for me because it combined two things I love: Shopping and traveling," she said.

In 2006 she accepted an offer from Jo-Ann Stores (the largest fabrics retailer in the nation) and moved to Ohio to begin work as a quilting buyer, and just as she did at Fred Meyer, she quickly advanced within the company. She eventually became the divisional merchandise manager in stewardship of nearly \$700 million in sales and lead a team of 16 people.

New adventures soon followed in her personal life. Vanderschuere and her husband, Michael, had daughter Ella in 2011. Their daughter's arrival triggered a need to be closer to home and they began to consider a move to the Northwest. That's when Vanderschuere began thinking about launching a business of her own.

*"Rosie Made, just like it's inspiration, is style and substance."*

Throughout her numerous buying trips, Vanderschuere noticed the bulk of products manufactured outside of the U.S. And she noticed that women hovered around the lower levels of management as men continued to advance. She rolled both observations into a singular focus: A business with products made in the U.S. that were part of companies operated by women. "I realized I wanted to create a socially conscious company that would help women domestically," she said. "I wouldn't change corporate America, but what I could do is educate consumers."

A solid work ethic and the ability to enjoy a frugal lifestyle come from her grandparents and parents. That mentality

continues today and it carries into the merchandise she selects for Rosie Made. It's about quality over quantity and the value of a well-made product that is more likely to be handed down to future generations rather than cast aside or sold at a yard sale. Her goal is to make Rosie Made "a premier destination for gift-giving."

Products include hand-crafted measuring spoons and pottery from Oregon, culinary lavender and bath products from Washington and delicious teas from Illinois. Boise-area products include organic treats by Dream Chocolate and charming jewelry from Miss Courageous.

*"Her goal is to make Rosie Made a premier destination for gift-giving."*

Rosie Made, just like it's inspiration, is style and substance. In addition to a wide array of high-quality gifts, it is also a source for inspiration. Blog entries highlight "Real Life Rosies," profiling professional women who share their insights on what inspires and motivates them and how they manage that all-important work/life balance.

Vanderschuere wants women to seek out her site not just to shop, but also to find a network of other women who can support and teach one another.

