



PROFIT

INNOVATIVE IDEAS YOU CAN USE



KATHY CHENG

SAVED HER FAMILY GARMENT BUSINESS WITH A NEW MADE-IN-CANADA BRAND



“After the recession, there was a much lower demand for domestic garment production. I became my dad’s business partner then, and we humbly restructured down to 40 people from around 100. Textile-wise, my father has so much experience, but he was never into sales or marketing, and felt that as a manufacturer we always had to be behind-the-scenes. But we couldn’t wait for business to come, so we developed the Redwood Classics brand. I felt there was a niche for retail-quality promotional apparel where, for example, a company puts its branding on a T-shirt for an event. It’s a made in Canada brand to stand out from the clutter. There used to be a lot of made-in-Canada products, but by 2009 they had mostly moved offshore. With the cost of fuel rising, and the cost of labour rising in China as well, not everything made in China is that cheap anymore. Now I’m getting people to realize if you do compare apples to apples, we’re not that much more expensive. It’s a quicker turnaround time, and we’re giving back to the economy. I say to clients, “Why put your brand on an inferior garment as opposed to one that will last longer, and is higher quality?” Since we started doing that, we’ve doubled in size. We moved to a bigger factory in January because we were just bursting at the seams.”

—AS TOLD TO JOE CASTALDO

In 1988, **KATHY CHENG**’s father founded a contract sewing company called ws & co. Kathy joined after the recession devastated the business, and turned it around by producing new garments for Roots and Holt Renfrew, as well as launching the Redwood Classics brand.

Photograph by Nikki Comerod; Hair and makeup by Claudine Baltazar/Plutino Group