



CRAFT MOVEMENT

CRAFT-LOVING NEWLYWED BRIDE Nicole Shariat Farb searched stores for materials to create handmade thank-you cards. She gathered paper and supplies from the usual bricks-and-mortar suspects, but her final product was far from the hoped-for look that Pinterest inspired.

Disappointed but undaunted, the newlywed tapped her entrepreneurial side, turning necessity into a DIY online startup called Darby Smart. Her idea: crafting project kits with everything needed to complete a DIY design, with step-by-step instructions, geared toward all levels of abilities, but especially novices. The twist: get fellow crafters to design the projects ranging from home décor to jewelry.

Then vice president at Goldman Sachs, Farb left in 2013 to create a “platform” where artisans make money when Darby Smart sells their designs.

Darby Smart featured designers submit projects, which are voted on by the Darby Smart community. Selected designs are turned into DIY kits and those designers receive a percent of kit sales.

Farb’s financial background aided her search for investors (\$1 million in seed funding) and a co-founder, and the company quickly grew from shipping 600 craft supplies to more than 35,000 in just one year. Meanwhile, Farb was eyeing Michaels, the Irving, Texas-based craft behemoth. Based on her parking lot interviews of customers, she thought her concept could “disrupt” the usual way crafters buy supplies.

Last August, Michaels announced a partnership that gives Darby Smart exposure to the more than 9 million monthly crafty customers who visit Michaels.com. In turn, Darby Smart users now have access to Michaels’ extensive crafting supplies.

Michaels directly links to Darby Smart from its

website—customers take a “DIY quiz” that directs them to projects selected for their particular taste profile. Darby Smart then gives Michaels’ shoppers a digital shopping list for DIY projects. Michaels’ shoppers are connected to Darby Smart’s community of more than 7 million, where DIYers trade content and project ideas daily. The next logical step? Watch for Darby Smart in-store classes and pop-up maker shops in the future, Farb says.

“Michaels and Darby Smart share a deep commitment to the maker movement,” says Chuck Rubin, CEO of Michaels. “This partnership helps us bring more people into the fold with accessible, modern, designer projects that anyone can make.”

Farb says 51 million people buy craft supplies in the United States, making it a \$29 billion industry. “I’ve been shopping at Michaels for many years, and there’s no other playground like it for the creative,” she says.

—Janet Groeber