

# MOM-TREPRENEURS

When inspiration leads to perspiration, sleepless nights and finding the perfect factory



BY AMY SENK

PHOTOS BY RALPH PALUNBO

Talk about market research – the mothers we know could tell you a thing or two. What products work, which ones don't, what needs to be invented... and fast. ♦ Then there are women who take those ideas and run with them, nurture them and never give up on them, even as they lie awake at night obsessing about them. They figure out how to choose factories and deal with government agencies, how to speak new languages of manufacturing, how to make and market their ideas, and eventually, turn a profit. ♦ We call them momtrepreneurs, and we asked three of these women how they managed to transform ideas into concrete creations.

**Pazit Ben-Ezri**, 31, Irvine. Mother of two. Inventor of the LulyBoo infant play lounge, which debuted in September at the ABC Kids Expo in Las Vegas.

**T**he idea first came to Pazit Ben-Ezri when her daughter was an infant and seemed overwhelmed in a crib that dwarfed her tiny body.

"I really tried to create some comfortable area for my daughter," Ben-Ezri says. "She wanted to snuggle in a small area, and we tried using pillows and blankets, but it wasn't perfect."

Later, when her son was born, her family was always on the go, creating even more baby-bed dilemmas. "Bassinets aren't really portable," she says. "And travel beds are not soft, and are so heavy."

Ben-Ezri searched baby stores and catalogs, but the perfect product did not exist. Although she had no experience in design or manufacturing (she studied behavioral science at Ben Gurion University in Israel), she spent months fixating on how to create the baby bed solution. "I woke up in the middle of the night, and everything came together," says Ben-Ezri. "I could not sleep that night. I started to sketch, the next day went to the store... I didn't know how to sew, so I used fabric and safety pins just to see the shape of it, just to put in my mind a real something, and from that point, I could not stop working."

She sewed by hand, then bought a sewing machine. She figured out where to buy wholesale fabrics. Using Tamara Monosoff's *The Mom Inventors Handbook* as her study guide, Ben-Ezri looked for companies that build prototypes and educated herself on buckles and fabrics and safety guidelines. Friends evaluated each new version (more than 20 before she was satisfied) and offered critiques; then Ben-Ezri would go back to work, always trying to improve as she made version after version of the bed.

"I just looked at the end product," she says. "Everything in between was an obstacle. I was just so passionate I didn't eat, and I really didn't sleep. I'd go to bed and think about it."

A year later, Ben-Ezri found herself debuting her LulyBoo bed, named for her daughter's nickname and the Hebrew word for crib. She is selling the beds through her Web site and talking to distributors, as well as working on new creations.

Her advice for creative women with ideas for new products? "People love to help and offer their opinions," she says. "You need to be open to criticism, because that helps you. There will always be obstacles, but I have a lot of passion."