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Red Ants: Catchy name, comfy pants

FROM 1B

"She's got a laser focus when it comes to her business and I think living in a smaller town is allowing her to do that," Deibert said.

The Internet is a great equalizer when it comes to geography in the business world and 80 percent of Red Ants Pants sales take place via the Web.

The company's marketing plan so far includes a commercial on YouTube, the user video-submitted online site, product demonstrations at house parties and booths at outdoor events and shows.

Customer feedback is encouraged, with gimmicks such as the Red Ants Challenge. Seamstresses place a single red ant on each pair of pants in a unique location. Find another customer with a pair with an ant sewn in the same place, submit a photo to the company and win a free T-shirt.

Now that she's up and running, Calhoun gets calls from young, would-be entrepreneurs looking for advice.

"I feel a little silly talking to them because I've made my fair share of mistakes," she said.

But she's more than happy to share her limited experience.

"If you are thinking about

going into business, read as much as you can," she said. "There are a lot of free resources out there to take advantage of."

For those not fortunate enough to bump into an expert in their potential industry in a coffee shop, Calhoun suggests seeking out experienced mentors.

"So much of business and manufacturing is networking," she said.

For example, Calhoun wanted to have her product made in the United States. Through connections Siberell helped her make, she found small mother-daughter operated company in Seattle that manufacturers Red Ants Pants products.

"You can't just Google in 'American labor' and find that sort of resource," she said.

Sometimes, a success in business boils down to gut instinct, Calhoun said. Or luck.

A promotional poster at the Red Ants Pants store in White Sulphur Springs shows women wearing brown, tan and blue prototypes. However, right now the only color available is brown.

"I bought \$45,000 worth of chocolate brown fabric and then found out that chocolate brown was the new black in the fashion world," Calhoun said.



TRIBUNE PHOTO/STUART S. WHIT

Sarah Calhoun inspects a newly arrived shipment of work pants for women at her store in White Sulphur Springs, Red Ants Pants