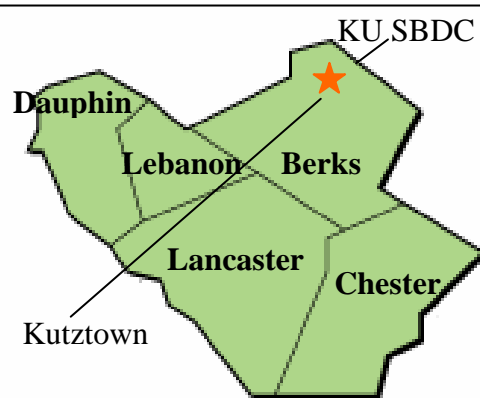




KU SBDC Paints International Potential for Colorfin

May 2008 Success Story
Kutztown SBDC *Success Connection*



*Colorfin is located in
Kutztown, Pennsylvania*

Colorfin, LLC
Bernadette Ward, Ladd Forsline
www.panpastel.com/colorfin.html

Industry: Arts and Crafts Supplies
Manufacturing

Year Founded:

SBDC Assistance: International
Marketing

Kutztown University SBDC
Ernie Post, Director
www.kutztownsbdc.org



Colorfin LLC, an art supply manufacturer in Kutztown, Pennsylvania, has opened to artists a new avenue of pastels. Traditionally, pastel colors are packaged as sticks; but, Co-founders Ladd Forsline and Bernadette Ward of Colorfin have manipulated the pastel formula, resulting in a low-dust, erasable, softer pastel, so soft it is packaged in a pan much like a makeup compact, called a PanPastel™.

Out of about 45 companies world-wide who manufacture traditional pastel sticks, Colorfin is the *only* operation creating this new form of pastels. “For the first time ever, pastels have been reinvented,” says Ward.

With help from KU SBDC consultants Alex Whan and Martin Brill, Colorfin has transformed its novel product into a booming international business. “Brill and Whan pointed us in the direction we needed to go,” says Ward.

With a combined experience of more than 35 years in the art and craft supplies market, it’s no wonder Panpastel™ Creators Frosline and Ward teamed up. Long-time artist and art supply business owner, Forsline fine-tuned his techniques while earning his Masters in Fine Arts (MFA) at the Yale School of



Art in 1988. Before *Colorfin*, Forsline started Forsline & Starr Ltd, where he helped create other groundbreaking artists’ products such as OilBar®, an oil painting stick, and Colourshaper®, a flexible silicone tipped painting tool.

Ward, with an international business and marketing degree from the National University of Ireland, Galway, handles the sales, marketing and more of the business tactics for *Colorfin*. After graduation, Ward began working at Westinghouse where she decided she needed more work with customer products. Ward shortly after started working with an art supply company in brand management. With world travel in her job description, Ward began developing relationships, contacts and markets she would utilize with *Colorfin*.

With Ward’s established artist market contacts from her previous job, the potential for international business was possible for *Colorfin*, but Forsline and Ward needed a little guidance. While securing finances for start-up from National Penn Bank, Forsline and Ward were directed to the Kutztown University Small Business Development Center for assistance in reaching their international market.



Where the magic happens, the testing studio

KU SBDC consultants Martin Brill and Alex Whan helped Forsline and Ward onto the international



Bernadette Ward and Ladd Forsline in their studio in Kutztown, Pennsylvania.

marketing stage. “Brill gave us insight into available export marketing grants, and also the programs for in-country research, which can help build local market contacts,” says Ward. “Brill and Whan gave us a grant we could actually apply for—for actual marketing activities.”

Due to help from the KU SBDC, *Colorfin* can be found in over 150 distributing stores in the United States and Canada, and has additional distributors in Norway, Holland, Belgium, France and Australia. “We are staged to enter some of the chain stores

in the next six months or so,” says Forsline. Not including Forsline and Ward, *Colorfin*, employs four workers in their warehouse in Kutztown, Pennsylvania, where they manufacture the pastel colors, package them as PanPastels™, and ready them for shipment.

As for advice for new business owners, “I would suggest other start-up company owners probe the SBDC to find out whom and what programs are available,” says Ward.

Forsline also speaks to potential business owners of the common denominator among entrepreneurs, perseverance. “It took us a long time to get through everything with the SBA.

We had a sleepy industry, compared to something like high-tech...Bernie and I have pretty thick skin. We’ve been in business before, and we just kept pushing.” Ward adds, “We kept pushing through all the doors that were closed to us.”



Ward and Forsline with a warehouse worker, creating PanPastels™



Colorfin offers 60 color options of professional artist pastel color. The pastels work more like paint than a pastel, and are applied with specially developed sponge Applicators called Sofft™ Tools. All PanPastel™ colors are specially formulated with a high lightfastness, meaning they are fade resistant and do not dull over time due to light exposure.

Visit *Colorfin*'s [website](#).

The Kutztown University Small Business Development Center provides one-on-one consulting, business planning tools, and free online business courses. Information about these free services is available at [our interactive website](#).

www.kutztownsbdc.org