

Andrea Fonseca

Principal Designer and Owner, Brazil Baroque

How do you measure success?

To me the real measure of success is how much I have been able to positively affect people—by providing jobs, through the products we offer, and through running a company with integrity and responsibility toward the environment. I don't feel that successful people are those with lots of money who have done everything for their own gain. When you achieve real success, you touch many other people's lives in a positive way.

What's your greatest achievement?

Creating a successful company in a foreign country, which required overcoming tremendous odds. Brazil Baroque was my dream, and I consider it my greatest achievement to date.

What are the best parts of your profession?

First and foremost, I get to do what I love with people who I admire and respect, and I have fun doing it. Second, I enjoy developing products that people love. Third, I get to interact with people from all over the world. Fourth, I get to help people, and last but not least, I am constantly rewarded with smiles.

Who or what inspires you?

My parents inspire me to do the work I do the way I do it. They taught me everything I know, especially how to be a successful leader. I also continue to be very inspired by the Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer, whose artistic perception has always been extraordinary.

What steps did you take to get where you are today?

I started small and grew the company gradually. I never gave up on my dream. A hard work ethic, integrity and honesty carried me every step of the way.

What are the greatest responsibilities in your position?

To continue to provide a good life for the families of more than 300 artisans in Brazil by giving them work. To stand behind what we do and to deliver what we say we will deliver. To continue to make social responsibility a priority in my business, and to encourage others to adopt same ethic.

What are your most vital business strengths?

Determination, passion and caring. I refuse to

accept "no" for an answer. There were many people who said I wouldn't be able to do what I have done, but I refused to listen to them. I am a believer.

What parts of your background have helped your career?

My training as an architect and as a designer has helped, as has coming from a nurturing environment in my home country.

What guiding principles inspire your work?

Being honest, ethical, socially responsible, and hardworking.

What current pursuit are you most excited about?

That we are expanding our business in the US as well as in Europe, Australia and New Zealand.

What sayings, phrase or motto do you try to live by?

Do what you love. Life is too short to be unhappy in your work. Go to work and make a difference, be proud of it, and never, ever take life for granted!

What advice would you give to a young woman who wants to start her own business?

Figure out what you love to do and go for it—don't be intimidated by others who have already achieved success—learn from them and create a support network with friends, family, teachers, and colleagues. Pursue your passion, learning everything you can about what it is you want to do. Start small, and be conscious of the complex enterprise that may lie ahead. You can do it!

What would people be surprised to learn about you?

I am a surfer and I love to boogie board.

Have you ever failed at something?

No, but I wouldn't be afraid if I did. Until now, I have been very successful in all my endeavors. If I have failed, I have not recognized those experiences as failures but as challenges to grow and move forward.

Describe your business persona:

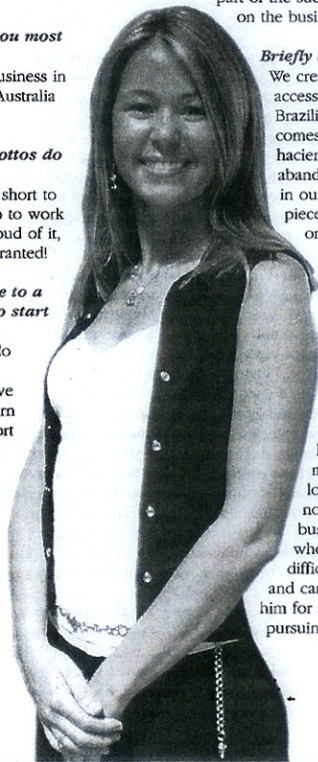
As far as business is concerned, I am serious, dedicated and organized. I am always looking ahead to see how our products and methods can be improved. I listen to my clients and my employees very carefully—their feedback is a vital part of the success of this company. I work on the business, not for the business.

Briefly describe your business:

We create hand crafted furniture and accessories made from reclaimed Brazilian hardwood. The wood comes from 18th and 19th century haciendas that have been abandoned. Designed and fabricated in our studios in central Brazil, each piece is a beautiful, functional and one-of-a-kind work of art. We also offer custom design and will work with you by helping you design your own pieces—a service that is rarely offered in the furniture manufacturing business.

Anything else?

I would like to thank my husband Marc for sharing his life with me, for understanding me and putting up with my long workdays. He is married not only to me but also to my business with 300 families for whom I feel responsible. It can be difficult, but he is a very patient and caring man, and I am grateful to him for always supporting me in pursuing my passion.



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