

Rib & Rhein
Thomas and Erin Ribeiro
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Summary by Stephanie Poncin

Opening a new retail store in a new state in the midst of an economic downturn was a daunting concept to owners Erin and Thomas of Rib & Rhein. Hailing from New York City, Erin worked in finance while her husband Thomas worked in retail, entertainment and hospitality. They decided that they did not want to work for anyone any longer and decided that where there is chaos, there is opportunity.

They opened their luxury concept store in Newport, Rhode Island which took a lot of preparation and sacrifice. In luxury it is essential to be cautious of every detail especially with money. One advantage of the 2008 economic crisis was that rent was cheap for the first few years. They also believed that there will always be a market for luxury because someone always needs something. In addition, Erin spoke about how in hard times, the customer chooses the best quality and also prefers a more personable place that makes them comfortable in a time of worry.

The luxury industry is just that, personable and catering to the customer. Rib & Rhein specializes in a niche audience of luxury consumers with items for men, women and children. In addition to clothing, they offer high-end accessories and home accents. From the opening in 2008 until now they have offered hand picked selections of designer goods to fill their shelves. Now they want to take their luxury concept store to the next level by adding their own brand of Rib & Rhein clothing, accessories and home furnishings. In addition to building their own brand, they are planning to expand to the Asian market and have started a small initiative there.

Indonesia is known for their ikat prints, especially on the island of Bali. There, Erin and Thomas have met the locals whom they would like to collaborate with. Rib & Rhein have a vision to share the locals' stories, including how their dyes are all natural using vegetables. Erin and Thomas want their ikat textiles for their new clothing line, so to help each other they will help create a better facility for them to be made. This helps the locals by giving more jobs and a cleaner, safer work environment.

This is a big part of their brand by having a relationship with everyone. They stated that one will never know when a particular person they have met could help them or become an asset to their company. Having a relationship with everyone is also a huge part of customer service. They believe their luxury brand has succeeded so far because of the strong relationship they have with customers. Even the ones who might not buy anything can tell their friends about the service they receive at Rib & Rhein. These customers become loyal to the brand that shows them how significant they are with their extensive personalized customer service and the brand's ability to see the big picture and not focus on the "right now".